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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

OF

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND DUTY.

BY NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

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ERRATA.

Page 31, 14th line from the top, for *evil* read *moral.* P. 49, 15th line from top, erase *of Sarah the mother of.* P. 87, 5th line from bottom, for *right* read *rite.* P. 121, 5th line from top, for *made* read *mode.* P. 196, 4th line from bottom, for *constantly* read *completely.* P. 229, 13th and 15th line from top, for *complaisance* read *complacence.* P. 237, 10th line from top, insert *almost* before *disobey.* P. 267, 15th line from top, erase . after themselves. P. 283, 16th line from bottom, for *preferred* read *preserved.*

A number of smaller errors and mistakes it is thought unnecessary to notice.

SERMON I.

THE DISPERSION AT BABEL.

GENESIS, XI. 8.—*So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth.*

Since the greatest part of the bible is properly historical, we may justly conclude, that history is not only entertaining, but useful. The scripture history of the world is the most ancient, as well as the most authentic. Profane history is altogether fabulous, which pretends to give an account of the world from Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Alexander. From that time downwards, the history of nations becomes more clear, just and authentic; but from that time upwards, the bible is the only source of authentic information. This book, indeed, gives us a history of the world from Adam to Noah, and then from Noah to Abraham and his descendants. The bible history from Noah to Abraham is very concise, but extremely interesting. The flood was an astonishing and important event. It reduced a world full of people to one single family of eight persons. From these, all mankind since that memorable catastrophe, have descended. The history of Noah's family, is the history of all mankind in miniature. Could we know how they increased, when and where they spread over the face of the earth, we should have a general and comprehensive knowledge of all antiquity. And so far as the bible will conduct us, in

searching for this useful knowledge, we may safely proceed. The words I have read, relate to the interesting event of the building of Babel, and the dispersion of those, who were concerned in that impious design.—"So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." I shall first inquire who those persons were; and then inquire, what were the most remarkable consequences of their dispersion.

I. Let us inquire, who were dispersed over the face of the earth, at the destruction of Babel. This is a more difficult and important point to ascertain than some may imagine. It is generally supposed, that they were the whole of mankind at that day; but, perhaps, in the course of our inquiry, we shall find this to be a mistake. We are told in the ninth chapter of this book of Genesis, that Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. He was probably a very great, as well as good man. Of his goodness God himself testified, when he told him, he had found him perfect in his generation. But mere goodness would not have qualified him for the great and extensive service, which God assigned him. He was to be the preserver of the old, and father of the new world. He was to erect a stupendous building to preserve the human race in the deluge. This was a work of art, as well as of time; and when he had preserved the world, he was also to be the guide and governor of it. It is therefore, to be presumed, that he was a man of extensive knowledge, as well as of eminent piety. Such a man must have had a great and powerful influence over all his posterity as long as he lived, and kept them in order, peace and harmony. And this is, probably, what the heathen poets allude to, when they celebrate the once golden age, as a time of univer-

sal justice, peace and prosperity. But if during Noah's life, mankind lived in peace and prosperity, then it is reasonable to suppose they increased very fast. It is computed that a people, at this day, double in number, once in twenty five years. And according to this ratio of increase, the eight persons in Noah's family must have increased to above one hundred and thirty thousand, before he died. This number was too large to live comfortably together on the plains of Shinar, all the while he lived. This leads us to inquire when his family first began to disperse. It is natural to conclude, that they would wish to live together as long as they could, or as long as Noah would permit them to do it.

If we now look back into the chapter preceding our text, we shall there find an account of a regular and general dispersion of Noah's family. The sacred historian first gives the genealogy of Japheth; and then says, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families in their nations." He next gives the genealogy of Ham; and "these are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations." In the last place, he gives the genealogy of Shem; and among his posterity he mentions Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided; and concludes by saying "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood." This was certainly a general dispersion of mankind into the various parts of the world. And from the account here given of it, as well as from other accounts, it appears to have been a regular and peaceable

dispersion. Hence we must conclude that it took place during the life of Noah, and under his direction, according to a divine appointment. This is intimated in several places of scripture. We read Deuteronomy xxxii. 8, 9, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." This refers to the dispersion of mankind after the flood, and represents God as alloting the places of the several nations, in reference to Judea, the land of his chosen people. This agrees with what God says by Ezekiel. "Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her." And Paul, speaking of the general dispersion of mankind, represents its taking place, according to the will and direction of the Deity, "who hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." This plainly intimates that God appointed the time when, and the places where mankind should be dispersed. The time was probably just before Noah's death. And this, Eusebius says, was the case. The places were these, according to the best accounts given us in history. The posterity of Japheth were sent into Europe; the posterity of Shem into Asia; and the posterity of Ham into Africa. The land of Judea was not divided among the nations; but reserved by God for his own use, to be given at a future time to his own people, the seed of Abraham.

But if this be a just account of the general dispersion of mankind, which took place in the life time of Noah, and under his direction; the question will naturally arise, Who were those, that lived on the plains of Shinar, built the tower of Babel, and were scattered over all the earth? It is evident they could not be the whole of mankind; for they had before been sent to the various places of their divine destination. Some had gone to one quarter of the world, and some to another. Who then could the builders of Babel be, that after the general dispersion of mankind were scattered over the earth? The scripture history will inform us upon this subject. They were the sons of Ham; for the sacred historian tells us, "The sons of Ham were Cush, and Misraim, and Phut, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah, Sheba, and Dedan. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, "Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel." But how came Nimrod, the son of Ham, and his posterity at Babylon where Babel was built? This portion of the earth was alloted to Shem; and Nimrod, with all the posterity of Ham, was appointed to go to Africa. What right then had Nimrod, or any of the sons of Ham, to take possession of the plains of Babylon? Undoubtedly they had no right at all. But this is the scripture account of the event. "The whole earth was of one language, and one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. And they said one to

another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto the heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they all have one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.--- Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." In the first verse in this account it is said, the whole earth was of one language; and that as they journeyed, they found a place, &c. But the original word, translated whole or all, may be translated every; and the original word translated earth, may be translated a land or province. With this criticism, the two first verses may be read thus; "And every region was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass in the journeying of the people from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar." The people, then, who journeyed from the east, were not all the people of the earth, but only the posterity of Ham and especially Nimrod and his posterity. This is a very rational account. But it is absurd to suppose that all the posterity of Noah, who consisted of an hundred and twenty or an hundred and thirty thousand, should all move in a body from the rich and fertile country around mount Ararat, where they first settled after the flood, without any divine direction,

or natural necessity. Hence it is natural to conclude, that the people, who journeyed from the east to the plains of Shinar, were Nimrod and his posterity. Especially when we reflect, it is expressly said, that "the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel." But how came Nimrod to pitch upon the plains of Shinar, after the general dispersion of mankind, and after he was directed to go into the parts of Africa, a country far distant, from Babylon; To this I would answer, there seems to be no account given of his conduct, but the following. When the posterity of Shem and Japheth obeyed the divine direction to separate, and go to the places alloted them, the posterity of Ham, or at least Nimrod and his descendants refused to obey the divine command. In open defiance to God, they moved from the east, and came to the pleasant land of Babylon, and there by force of arms, took the plains of Shinar out of the hands of the children of Shem. This is agreeable to the character of Nimrod, "he was a mighty hunter:" a man of a bold, enterprizing spirit, and destitute of the fear of God and every principle of humanity. Having taken possession of this pleasant spot, by violence, he viewed himself exposed to be molested by the posterity of Shem. And to guard himself, his family and his followers, and to prevent being scattered any further, he formed the scheme of building a great tower; at once to display his great strength, and to be a centre of union among his future offspring. This is agreeable to the account, which the builders of Babel give of their design. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name," or as it may be rendered, a mark or sign, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of

the whole earth." They determined not to disperse, as God had required, and as the other branches of Noah's family had done. This shows, that they built Babel in rebellion against God; and that God had just cause to come down and defeat their impious design, by confounding their language. What is to be understood by this, interpreters are divided in their opinion. Some suppose, that the builders of Babel entirely lost their language, and had to get a new language, in order to converse together. But others more naturally suppose, the confusion of language happened only to the builders of Babel; and that by loosing their pronunciation, until they were dispersed. This seems highly probable; for we find that different nations could converse together after the dispersion, without an interpreter. And it is supposed by many, that all the different languages now in the world may be accounted for, by those variations, which would naturally arise, from the dispersion of mankind into different and distant countries. But be this as it may, it is very evident that the confusion of language happened only to the builders of Babel; and that these were the children of Ham, and especially in the line of Nimrod. It is not likely that all the children of Ham were concerned in the building of Babel; but it is more probable, that Nimrod and his posterity, with some of the children of Shem, whom Nimrod subdued, were the only people who built Babel, and were scattered over all the face of the earth. At least, it seems very certain that the people, who were scattered at the destruction of Babel, were not the whole of mankind, but only the children of Ham, and a few others, who joined in their rebellion and shared in their punishment. I now proceed,

II. To inquire what were the most remarkable consequences of the dispersion of the children of Ham, at the destruction of Babel, and the confusion of language.

Nimrod and his posterity were mighty men. They were men of knowledge, as well as men of war. This appears from their taking the plains of Shinar out of the hands of the children of Shem and building the tower of Babel. According to history, they were celebrated for agriculture, mathematics, and astronomy. They were, in short, the most knowing and most powerful branch of Noah's family, that is of all mankind. It is, therefore, natural to conclude, that their being driven, by the hand of heaven, from the plains of Shinar, and scattered abroad, there must have followed some remarkable and interesting consequences from such a great event. And here it may be observed,

1. That their dispersion was productive of war.—They waged the first war after the flood, in taking possession of Babylon. And after they were driven from thence, they maintained their rebellious and warlike spirit. They would not take their proper place among the nations according to God's appointment; but wandered about near Babylon, and infested the children of Shem in those parts. This excited the children of Shem to rise against them, and defend themselves. They succeeded, and laid these disturbers of peace under tribute. But they soon revolted and refused to pay tribute, which brought on, in about twelve years, another and more general war. The children of Shem, in various places, united together and determined to destroy or to disperse these rebellious children of Ham. This was the war we have an account of in the fourteenth of Genesis, in which four Kings with five engaged in battle. In

this war, the children of Ham were obliged to flee, and according to the divine determination, they were scattered over the face of all the earth. These giants, for so they are called by both sacred and profane historians, dispersed far and wide into various parts of the world. Some went to Egypt. There they conquered the original inhabitants, and continued there about two hundred and fifty years, till at length the original inhabitants of Egypt rose and drove them out of their country. And from Egypt they went to the land of Judea, and subdued the inhabitants, and took possession of that rich and fertile country. There they continued, until the children of Israel drove them out under the conduct of Joshua. From Judea they went to Greece, and violently took possession of it. There the main body remained, while small parties wandered over China, Africa, and almost every quarter of the world. But wherever they went, they went in an hostile manner and being expert in arts and in arms, they easily conquered those they called Barbarians; and they called all nations but themselves so. Their course was every where marked with violence and cruelty.

2. This knowing and powerful people carried the arts and sciences with them, wherever they went. In these, they excelled all other people. It was this people, that did such wonders in Egypt. After they subjected the original inhabitants there, they employed them in all kinds of manufactures; and especially in building those astonishing pyramids; in cutting canals; in making the great lake Mœris; and in cultivating the extensive plains, which were once a year overflowed by the Nile. Hence it came to pass, that Egypt, after they left it, was so celebrated for arts and sciences.---

This was owing to the Cuthites, who were dispersed at the distruction of Babel. They likewise carried the arts and sciences into Canaan ; and from thence into Greece ; and from thence into China and into all other countries whether they directed their course. All the most ancient and astonishing works of magnificence, grandeur, ingenuity, and even utility, were performed by this powerful and ingenious people, whom providence scattered over the face of the earth, for our benefit, as well as for the benefit of mankind in general. Though they determined not to be scattered, yet they were the most scattered of any of the children of men. And notwithstanding their tyranny and cruelty, they did much to spread light and knowledge among the inhabitants of the earth. Of this, they have left astonishing monuments, in almost all parts of the world.

But I must add,

3. That this learned and ingenious people were gross idolaters, and spread idolatry through all nations whom they subdued, and among whom they lived. They were the most corrupt and wicked part of Noah's family. When all the other branches of his family submitted to the divine direction to disperse, they refused to submit. They went to Babylon in defiance to the true God. They set up the worship of the sun, the worship of fire ; the worship of demons, or departed men ; the worship of the dove that was sent out of the ark ; and the worship of serpents, and other animals, and reptiles. Such gross idolatry they carried into Egypt, into Canaan, and into all places whither they went. Noah was an eminently pious man, who undoubtedly instructed his posterity in the knowledge of the true God and of the true religion, as long as he liv-

ed. And he lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood, which was sometime after the first and general dispersion of his posterity. Accordingly, the children of Shem and of Japheth were worshippers of the true God, after the first dispersion, and carried the true religion with them into the distant parts of the world whither they went, by divine direction. And it is to be presumed, that the worship of the true God was maintained for a considerable time after the death of Noah, and the general dispersion of mankind. And had it not been for the particular dispersion of the sons of Ham at the destruction of Babel, the true religion might have been handed down through all succeeding generations. But the dispersion of this powerful, enlightened, and idolatrous people, spread idolatry every where, and proved the unhappy occasion of corrupting the whole world. They set up their false deities, erected their idolatrous temples, and established the most absurd and abominable modes of worship. And taking advantage of the native depravity of the human heart, they easily destroyed the true religion, and spread the most absurd and demoralizing sentiments among all nations but one, and even that they well nigh destroyed by their artful modes of seduction. Such were some of the great, extensive, and lasting consequences of the dispersion of the children of Ham, at the destruction of Babel and confusion of language.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. This subject gives us reason to think, that true religion prevailed and flourished for many years after the flood. Every thing was suited to produce this happy ef-

fect. Noah was a man of piety, who was called to pass through scenes the most solemn and instructive. He saw the universal wickedness and stupidity of the world; and as a preacher of righteousness, he solemnly warned them of the tremendous calamity coming upon them, but without effect. He visibly manifested his faith in the execution of the divine threatenings, by preparing an ark of safety for himself, his family, and every species of living creatures. Just before the rains descended and the flood came, Noah, with a heavy heart, took his leave of the world, and with his family entered into the ark, and the Lord shut him in. There he continued an hundred and fifty days. What a long season for solemn reflection on the obduracy of the human heart, and on the severity and mercy of God! Though he had lived nearly six hundred years, and observed much of the ways of God and of the ways of men; yet he probably learned more of God, more of himself, more of the worth of souls, and more of the vanity of the world, while shut up in the ark, than he ever learned before. There was one window in the ark, through which he could see the busy world six days before the flood came. After that, he could see the rains descending, the waters increasing, multitudes flying every where for shelter, and undoubtedly he could hear some surrounding the ark, and with piercing cries pleading for admission into the only sanctuary or place of refuge upon the face of the earth. But God had shut him in, and all the rest of the world out. Though his heart melted with compassion for a sinking world he could give them no relief. At length the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the waters covered the highest mountains, the cries of men were no more to be heard, an awful si-

lence succeeded and there was nothing to be heard or seen but an universal ocean. This he could not refrain from viewing and contemplating day after day until it entirely subsided and disappeared. Must not such great, solemn, and affecting objects have made deep impressions on the heart of any man, and especially on the heart of such a good man as Noah was ? He was entirely disengaged from all worldly cares, concerns, and interruptions. He had nothing to do but to contemplate on the present, reflect on the past, and anticipate the future. The sparing mercy of God towards him and his family, must have filled his heart with gratitude and his mouth with praise. The awful destruction brought upon the unbelieving, impenitent, ungodly world, must have given him the deepest sense of the nature, malignity and fatal consequences of sin, and of the holiness and justice of God in the everlasting ruin of his incorrigible enemies. These religious instructions and impressions he carried with him, when God allowed him to leave the ark, and resettle the world. Accordingly, we are told, "Noah immediately builded an altar unto the Lord ; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour ; and the Lord said, in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake ; though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Neither Noah, nor his family could ever forget the solemn, instructive and affecting scenes through which they had past, nor erase from their minds the deep impressions those scenes had

made upon them. They would naturally relate to their children what they had seen, and heard, and felt, during the awful period of the flood; and they again would relate the same things from one generation to another. While, at the same time, the astonishing effects of the deluge every where to be seen, would continually admonish the rising generations to love and fear the God of their fathers, as the only thing that could secure his favor, and save them from his future and everlasting wrath. Agreeably to this supposition, we find that religion did continue and flourish in some branches of Noah's family, a long time after he left the ark and resettled the world. He lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood, and had a supreme controul over all the concerns of men, and especially over all their religious concerns. There can be no doubt but that he promoted the cause of true religion, as long as he continued in the world. And there is reason to believe, that Shem and Japheth and their families were friendly to religion after his death. We find that several eminently pious men lived in those days; particularly Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Job, Abimelech, and Jethro. These, and many other individuals probably maintained the true religion and the true worship of God several ages after Noah, notwithstanding the general prevalence of idolatry and false religion in the world. There was, however, but a glimmering of true religion among the nations of the earth, from Abraham to Moses, when the children of Israel were formed into a visible church in the land of promise.

2. We learn from the scripture history of mankind, which we have been considering, that infidelity has been the principal source of the wars and fightings that

have deluged the world in blood. Nimrod was the first infidel in Noah's family, and the first who began and carried on an unjust and offensive war after the flood. In direct rebellion against God, and without any injury or just provocation from the children of Shem, he waged war against them, and, by force of arms, took possession of the plains of Shinar which God had given them for their inheritance. And after God drove him from his usurped possession, he carried with him his destructive martial spirit, and kindled the flames of war among both the children of Shem and Japheth, and from thence he carried war into Egypt, and afterwards he and his posterity carried war among every nation where they were scattered. These infidel giants were the enemies that Joshua had to combat and conquer in order to put the children of Israel into the possession of the land which God had given them. The religion of Moses forbade the people of God to wage offensive wars against any of the heathen nations, whom God himself had not commanded them to destroy. The religion of Christ has always had the same peaceful influence upon those, who have professed to embrace it. While the Roman empire remained heathen they carried war and desolation among all the nations, whom they were able to conquer, for the sake o power and plunder. But after it became christian, and Constantine possessed the supreme government of the empire, they professedly ceased to wage offensive wars. The truth is, that the enemies, and not the friends of true religion, have always been the principal disturbers of the peace of nations, and spread misery and destruction among the inhabitants of the world. Infidels have had the effrontery to charge christians with the guilt of

fomenting wars, and spreading misery and desolation through the earth ; but all history sacred and profane refutes this unjust and malignant reproach.

3. It appears from what has been said, that all false religion is only a corruption of the true. The true religion was revealed to Adam. It was preserved and kept alive until the days of Noah. He was a perfect and upright man, while the rest of the world apostatized from God and became totally corrupt. He understood, believed and maintained religion, while in the ark, and after he resettled the world. His sons Shem and Japheth, and their children believed and practised true religion, until the children of Ham renounced the true God and true religion, and became idolators. These gradually spread infidelity and every species of false religion among the other branches of Noah's family. But if true religion had not first been revealed and practised, there is no reason to think, that mankind, who are born like the wild ass's colt, and dead in trespasses and sins, would ever thought of any such thing as any kind of religion. Though they are formed capable of knowing that the world must have been created, that the Creator of it must possess almighty power, perfect wisdom, and universal goodness, and therefore is worthy to be loved, feared and obeyed ; yet they would not have gained this knowledge unless they had been first taught by God himself. This knowledge God taught Adam and the patriarchs, who conveyed it down to their posterity by mere tradition, without a divine written revelation, until the law was given by Moses at Mount Sinai. But this tradition was gradually corrupted, and became the source of all the false religions that were in the world till the law

was given. And tho' this was given to the Jews, yet they by their wars and intercourse with surrounding nations, spread some knowledge of God and divine things among them, which prevented the total loss of all knowledge of God and religious worship. And the spread of christian knowledge has had the same tendency to prevent the heathen nations from becoming entirely destitute of all religious notions, and modes, and forms of religious worship. It is, therefore, clearly evident, that all false religion is but a corruption of the true, and had it not been that God, in various ways taught mankind, there would not have been religion of any kind in the world. Deists pretend that they have discovered natural religion, independently of all divine revelation, which is entirely rational, and free from the superstition, enthusiasm, idolatry, and all the errors of both heathens and christians. But all history, both sacred and profane, refutes their vain and false pretensions. They, as well as all the heathen world, are indebted to divine revelation for all their boasted knowledge of any religion, whether natural or traditional. The heathens are indebted to the Jews, and the deists are indebted to the christians, for all the knowledge they have of either natural, traditional, or revealed religion. All that is true or important in deism, Paganism, Mahomedism, or any false religion, has been derived from the true revealed religion; which proves that all religious errors are but so many corruptions of religious revealed truth contained in the bible.

4. It appears from what has been said, how much easier it is to spread any false religion in the world, than the true religion. A few bold, wicked, rebell-

ous children of Ham were the first corrupters of all nations of the earth, who had been educated in the true religion. Shem and Japheth were the most numerous, and best instructed branches of Noah's family, who had every advantage to maintain and preserve the true religion in the world, and had they been as zealous to promote it as Nimrod and his followers were to corrupt it, they would have preserved and handed it down, through all nations until the days of Abraham, and the time of Moses, when a written revelation was given. So that the name of heathens would never have been known in the world. But all men, like the Jews, were bent to backsliding, and loved error better than truth, and a false religion better than that revealed from heaven. The same love to errors and delusions still reigns in the hearts of both the heathen and christian world, which renders it so extremely difficult to maintain true religion where it is known and professed, and to carry and establish it where it is not known. All the nations from Adam to this day, have always had opportunities of knowing God and the way to eternal life, if they had only loved light more than darkness, and truth more than error and falsehood respecting divine and eternal things. To this cause Christ ascribed the spiritual blindness and ignorance of mankind. By their feelings and conduct towards the gospel, they are every where proving the truth of that religion, which they either deny or reject. They act out that depravity on which the gospel is founded, and which the gospel is designed to remove, and thereby demonstrate the necessity of divine revelation.

5. It is a strong evidence in favour of the religion contained in the bible, that it has been so long preserv-

ed in the world, notwithstanding all mankind could do to destroy it. Every nation united their exertions against it, all the while it was preserved by tradition, which was till the days of Moses, when God planted his church in Judea, in the midst of the nations, who viewed it as a speckled bird, and flocked around it to destroy it, until the christian church was erected; and ever since that day, Jews and Gentiles have been combined against it. But though the flames of persecution, from age to age, and from time to time, have been kindled around it and threatened to destroy it, yet it has never been consumed. It still lives, and flourishes, and spreads. This is the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. For it is a visible evidence, that it came at first from God, and has been preserved by his constant care and powerful protection. The friends of Zion have always had occasion to say to God as David did; "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then had they swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth." Though other religions have been devised and propagated, by the power of the sword and arm of government; yet they have died one after another; but the christian religion has lived, and spread, and triumphed over all opposition; which cannot be accounted for by mere human means. It bears the stamp of a divine signature, and carries its own internal evidence with it to the understandings, and consciences, and hearts of all, who have candidly and impartially considered it. It is out of the power of learn-

ing, and reason, and criticism to raise a solid objection against it.

6. We learn from what has been said, the deplorable state, in which mankind in general have been involved for ages, and are still involved. A part of Europe, all Asia and Africa, and part of North and South America, are still sitting in the region and shadow of death, and perishing for the want of the gospel. About two thirds of the whole human race are now involved, either in the darkness of Paganism, Mahomedism, Judaism, or Popery, and destitute of a part, or the whole of the bible. None of them have the free use of the New Testament, which plainly contains the gospel of divine grace, which is able to make men wise unto salvation. Though some in some of these nations have well cultivated minds and a large share of human knowledge; yet they either know not God, or have false conceptions of his nature, perfections, and designs. They have no conceptions, or false conceptions of the way of finding favor with God and securing the salvation of their souls, which are infinitely precious. Though they feel pleased with their religious errors and delusions, and fondly hope they will secure their happiness in a future state, if there be such a state; and though they are without excuse for their moral blindness, ignorance, and prejudices; yet they are to be pitied; for they are undoubtedly yet the nations that forget God, and must be cast off and perish, unless the gospel shall be carried to them, and they cordially embrace it. It is indeed, a dark mystery, that God has suffered them so long to walk in their own way, without using such effectual means to enlighten and save them, as he always has had power to

use. But we have good reason to believe, that he will yet bring light out of their darkness, holiness out of their blindness, and happiness out of their misery.

7. This subject shows the great reason that christians have to expect, desire and pray for a better state of things in the world. They know that God has promised to give the Gentiles, as well as the Jews to Christ, for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. They have reason to expect, therefore, that God will fulfil his promises to his Son, and bring all nations into cordial subjection to him. They have the same reason to desire, as to expect, that Christ will reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. For there is nothing but his reign or the prevalence of his religion, that can remove the natural and moral evils, which abound, depress and destroy the great majority of the human race. Neither civilization, nor learning nor the arts of living, can meliorate the moral state of the world. These means have been tried in the most enlightened and refined parts of Europe and America, and failed of success. As nations have increased in these things, so they have sinned. Tyranny and oppression, wars and bloodshed, have prevailed as much in civilized, as in uncivilized nations, and produced as great natural and moral evils. Nothing but the pure gospel of Christ, has been an effectual remedy to reform, purify, and save any of the children of men. But so far as the gospel has had its genuine influence upon the hearts of men, it has never failed to transform them into the moral image of God, and prepared them to promote peace, liberty, holiness and happiness, to the extent of their power. There is reason to expect that the gospel will sooner

or later spread over all the earth, remove all tyranny and and oppression, idolatry and delusions, and every species of vice and immorality, and cause this dark, depraved world to become holy, peaceful and happy. And is not this as much to be desired, as expected? And if to be desired and expected, is it not to be prayed for? Christ has taught all his disciples to pray for it daily, by sincerely praying to his Father, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But what will expectations, desires and prayers do, without correspondent exertions? All christians in every part of the world ought to exert themselves, to promote the melioration of the natural, evil, and religious state of the ignorant, and deluded, and miserable nations, with whom they are surrounded and connected.

Our free, civilized, and gospelized nation has unhappily and sinfully been connected with the nations of Africa. We have in violation of every humane and religious principle, traded in the souls of men, bought thousands and thousands of Africans, brought them from their native country to this, and here subjected them to the hardest labor, the meanest drudgery, and most absolute slavery. Their sighs and groans have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and cried for mercy and deliverance to themselves, if not for vengeance on their oppressors. Though none of us, perhaps, have been personally concerned in this great iniquity, yet our nation has been and is concerned in it.--- We cannot excuse ourselves, if we do not openly disapprove of it, condemn it, and use all proper means to put an end to it. A scheme has been devised and a society formed, gradually to emancipate those who

have been held in bondage, but have been freed, and are desirous of being transported back to their native country, relatives, and friends, with a view to enlighten and civilize others, and to put a final stop to the slave trade on the African coast. This is a most humane and benevolent design, and it is hoped it will be approved and promoted by individuals at present, and soon by the national legislature. Realizing the freedom, the civilization, and the blessings of the gospel, which we have long and fully enjoyed, can we forbear to throw in our mite, to promote such a humane, important, and benevolent purpose? If the design be accomplished, it will give the fairest opening and prospect of not only breaking the rod of oppressors, but of spreading the glorious gospel among a large portion of the human race, who are perishing in their ignorance and guilt, while it will wipe off a foul blot from our national honor, humanity, and religion. These are motives, which must sink deeply in every benevolent heart.

SERMON II.

THE HOPELESS STATE OF THE HEATHEN.

PSALM IX. 17.—*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

The time was, when all the nations of the earth knew and acknowledged the only living and true God. This time, however was of short duration. The nations were soon divided and scattered over the four quarters of the globe. Soon after their separation from each other, they lost their religious traditions, grew vain in their imaginations, and degenerated into all kinds of idolatry. The true religion would have become entirely extinct, had not God selected one nation from all the rest, and given them a written and standing revelation. Of this nation David was both a king and a prophet. As the king of God's peculiar people, he viewed all the heathen nations as his personal enemies ; and as a prophet of the true church, he viewed all the heathen nations as enemies to the true God and the true religion. Hence it is, that he so often blends his enemies with the enemies of God, and speaks of both as exposed to both temporal and eternal ruin. This mode of speaking runs through this psalm. He begins with praising God for the overthrow of his enemies. " I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart ; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee ; I will sing praise to

thy name, O thou most High. When mine enemies are turned back they shall fall and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause : thou sattest in the throne judging right. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked." From God's past conduct, he proceeds, under the influence of a true prophetic spirit, to foretel his future conduct towards the wicked, and especially the heathen, whom he considered as such. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made : in the net which they hid is their own foot taken." It follows in the next verse but one, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." This is not a mere threatening, but a plain prediction ; and therefore the veracity of God stands pledged to fulfil it. The prediction is, that all the finally wicked shall be destroyed, and among these, all nations that forget God. This is a description of all the heathen world, who are destitute of divine revelation. For it was common among the Jews, as well as among us, to call all nations heathens, who were left to the mere light of nature. It is true, that in David's day all nations were heathens except the Jews ; but now by the heathens we mean only those nations, who never enjoyed the gospel. To these nations the prediction in the text still extends, and assures us that it is God's fixed determination to destroy them, as well as the unbelievers of the gospel. The text contains this solemn truth,

That all the heathens will finally perish.

Since this is a subject, upon which both the learned and unlearned differ in their opinions, I shall endeavor to treat it as thoroughly and plainly as I can. To

make it appear, that the heathens will be finally lost, I would observe,

1. That God many years ago, gave them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. The first heathen nations might have known God, but they chose to forget him. And from this circumstance, they are justly called the nations that forget God.--- The first families and nations after the deluge, were instructed by their pious progenitors in the knowledge of God and of true religion. And it is highly probable, that when the nations were divided, and sent to the various parts of the earth to which God directed them, there were some pious and intelligent persons, in each nation, who would have gladly instructed them, if they had been willing to receive divine instruction. But the body of each nation chose to forget and forsake their creator, and sink into a state of gross ignorance and impiety. This was highly displeasing to God ; and for this he gave them up to judicial blindness and stupidity. Paul, speaking of the heathens, says, " Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind." And Paul and Barnabas both say, " God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Both these passages plainly imply, that the heathens had then long been given up to judicial blindness. And it seems natural to conclude, that this heavy curse fell upon them, at the time of the calling of Abraham. As all the nations had then become idolaters, so they then deserved to be given up ; and as God's peculiar covenant with Abraham included all religious privileges, so it seemed to cut off all nations from those peculiar blessings. At that time, how-

ever, or soon after, God actually withheld the means of grace from the heathen world. He did not speak to them by dreams, or visions, or face to face, as he did to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their posterity. And when God withheld all special communications from the heathen nations, then they were certainly devoted to ruin. In this forlorn condition, the heathen nations have been, for more than four thousand years. God has left them to walk in their own ways, without sending them angels, or prophets, or Christ, or apostles, or ministers, to teach the way of salvation. He has denied them the means of grace, and therefore, there is reason to conclude, that he never will make them the subjects of his grace, until he sends them the gospel. He has declared by his word and providence, that he has given them up to judicial blindness and ignorance, which plainly implies, that they with the rest of the finally wicked, shall be turned into hell.

2. When God formed the seed of Abraham into a distinct nation and visible church, he shut the door against the heathen nations. At mount Sinai, God avouched the Israelites to be his people ; and they avouched him to be their God, and promised to pay a universal obedience to his commands. By some of these cammands, he separated them from all intercourse with the heathen nations ; forbidding them to make treaties, or intermarriages with them, or to follow any of their peculiar customs and manners. They might neither worship their gods, nor eat, nor drink in their temples, nor at their tables They were directed to consider all the heathen world, or all nations but their own, as out of the pale of the church, and out of the favor of God. And this is confirmed by the very permission, which God gave

to the heathens to become Jews; that is to become circumcised, to live among the Jews, and to unite with them in their modes of religious worship. God declared, that Jerusalem was the only place, where men could worship acceptably; and, by this, excommunicated the whole heathen world. When God erected Israel into a visible church, he virtually excluded all other nations from it. But can we suppose, that God would excommunicate all the heathen nations from the priviliges of the true church, if he did not mean to cast them off forever? Why should he expressly separate those on earth, whom he intended to unite in heaven? All the heathen nations are properly outcasts; and so long as God continues them in this situation, there is no reason to think, that he means to save them. The present heathen nations are as ignorant and wicked as the ancient heathen nations were, and there is no more reason to imagine, that the present heathen nations, as such, will be saved, than that those ancient heathen nations were; but on the other hand, to suppose, that as the ancient heathens were destroyed, so the present heathen nations will meet with the same awful doom.

3. When God sent Christ into the world, to bring life and immortality to light, he directed him to preach to the Jews, and not to the gentiles. Hence we read, "He came to his own, and his own received him not." By his own are meant his own people, the Jews.--- They were God's peculiar people in distinction from all the heathen nations; and they alone God meant to favor with the means of grace, which he had denied to all the heathens whom he had given up to destruction.--- Upon this ground Christ himself declares, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."---

Though he preached to many cities and villages in Judea, yet he never went to the gentiles. And no reason can be given for this, but that God meant to leave the heathens in their ignorant and perishing condition. It was a prevailing opinion in our Savior's day that "salvation is of the Jews;" that is, confined to them. Nor did Christ contradict this opinion, though he predicted that the gentiles should, in some future time, worship the true God in spirit and in truth. His whole conduct and preaching carried the idea, that God did not design to bestow his grace, where he denied the means of grace.

4. When God sent the apostles to preach to heathens, he sent them to turn them from heathenism to christianity. They durst not go to the gentiles, until they were expressly and divinely directed to go. They looked upon them as given over to ruin, and supposed that God intended to destroy them without remedy.--- When Cornelius, the gentile, sent for Peter to preach to him, he durst not go until he received a vision from God, in which he was commanded to go. And though he was successful in preaching, yet his brethren blamed him for his conduct, until he convinced them, that God had meant to save some of the gentiles. For this purpose, Peter and Paul and the other apostles were sent to the heathens. This Paul declares with respect to his own mission. He says when Christ converted him, he addressed him in these terms: "Rise, and stand on thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles, unto whom I now

send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith, that is in me." This commission plainly implies, that the heathens, to whom Paul was sent, were in a state of condemnation and exposed to endless destruction. It was a great mystery to Paul and others, until it was revealed, that salvation should be extended to the gentiles. Hence he says to the Ephesians, "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery---which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto us the holy apostles and prophets by the spirit; that, the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It was also a great mystery to the Jewish converts, that the apostle should preach to gentiles, and that with success. The church at Jerusalem were astonished, when Peter told them of his success, at the house of Cornelius. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." Paul and Barnabas related their success among the gentiles to the church at Antioch, as a matter of admiration. "And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that the Lord had done with them, and

how he had opened the door of faith to the gentiles." And Peter mentions it to the council at Jerusalem, as something very extraordinary, that he should be appointed to preach the gospel to gentiles, in order to their salvation. "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among you, that the gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." Thus the apostles declare, that they were sent to the heathens, that they might believe and be saved; which implies that without the gospel, they were perishing for lack of knowledge.--- And, indeed, the apostle Paul expressly tells the believers at Ephesus, that before the gospel came to them, they were in a state of total ignorance and despair.--- "Wherefore remember that ye being in time past gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Now if the heathen nations were in a perishing condition, in the days of the apostles, they are in the same condition, at this day. For all the nations, whom the gospel has not reached, are still without Christ, without God and without hope in the world. And if the apostles had a right to believe and say, that the heathens would perish without the light of the gospel, then we have the same right to believe and say, that those who still live and die without the gospel, will be turned into hell.

5. God has told us, that he intends to convert all the heathen nations, and that he intends to do it, by the

instrumentality of the gospel. God promised to Abraham, that "in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God said to Christ in the second psalm, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." God told his ancient church by Isaiah, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the gentiles." The angel said to the shepherds at Christ's birth, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Simeon said, when he took Christ into his arms, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Paul, speaking to the believing gentiles concerning the unbelieving Jews, says, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall, salvation is come to the gentiles. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the gentiles; how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness, in part, is happened unto Israel until the fulness of the gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." It appears from these passages of scripture, that God intends to convert all the heathen nations, in some future period. He has already cast away the Jews, in order to convert gentiles; and

he will call them in again, to answer the same purpose. The time is coming when all nations shall be converted. But this great and desirable event is to be brought about, by the instrumentality of the gospel. This is plainly and repeatedly predicted in the scripture.--- Paul, speaking upon this subject, declares, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If all nations are ever converted, it must be by the spread of the gospel, and the diffusion of divine knowledge. Hence the universal spread of the gospel is connected with the universal conversion of the heathen nations, in the revelation of John. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people?" Thus it appears, that so long as God withholds the gospel from the heathen nations, so long they will remain in a perishing condition, and there can be no hope of their salvation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God will not save the heathens, who are destitute of the gospel, then we have no reason to think he will save the Jews, while they disbelieve the gospel. The gentiles were given up for rejecting the true knowledge of God, and the Jews were broken off

for rejecting the true knowledge of Christ. And so long as they continue to reject Christ, as the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world, there is no reason to think, that God will show mercy to them. Though they have uniformly and tenaciously maintained their belief in the divine inspiration and authority of the Old Testament ; though they profess to believe and obey the laws of Moses ; though they do externally obey those laws, as the Scribes and Pharisees did ;--- yet this affords no good evidence, that God will accept their services and save them from suffering that eternal death, which they deserve, and from which he cannot consistently save them, on any other ground than the atonement of Christ. We are constrained to believe this, by what Christ expressly said to them on this subject ; " Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." The Jews, ever since their dispersion, have been more or less of them mixed with christian, as well as with heathen nations, and have had opportunities of hearing and reading the gospel, and of examining the arguments, by which christian writers maintain the divinity of Christ and the fundamental truths of the gospel ; but this is no excuse, but a great aggravation of their unbelief of the gospel. It demonstrates, that they both see and hate both Christ and his Father, which is a tenfold aggravation of their obstinate infidelity. So Christ said of their fathers ; " If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloak for for their sin." Though the Jews were once addicted to idolatry ; yet ever since their captivity in Babylon, they have become more bigoted to their own religion, than any other nation in the world. They have generally

rejected deism, and almost universally rejected heathenism, Mahometanism, and christianity ; and amidst all the national revolutions in which they have been involved for ages, they have rigidly adhered to Judaism. They are more opposed to christianity, than to any other religion ; just as the heathens are more opposed to their religion, than to any other, which is not so unsocial. If the Jews were not extremely blind and obstinate, it seems as though they would readily believe the gospel ; for they have the law in their hands, which was designed and calculated to be a school master, to bring men to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. Both the moral and ceremonial law show the necessity of an atonement for sin, and the moral impossibility of sinners being saved, without their renouncing their self-righteousness, and relying alone upon the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. Paul told the Jews that they must perish, if they rejected Christ. "Brethren, my hearts desire, and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." There is no reason to believe, that God will now, any more than in the apostle's day, save the Jews so long as they abide in unbelief of the gospel.

2. If God will not save the heathens, who are destitute of the gospel ; then we have no reason to believe, that he will save atheists, deists, and those, who deny the fundamental principles of christianity. There have been some men in the world, who have called them-

selves atheists and have been called so by others.--- They have openly denied, that there is an eternal, self-existent Being, who has created, upholds, and governs all things in the natural and moral world. They have not only denied the existence of the only living and true God, but employed their learning and ingenuity to disprove his existence. There have been many men in the christian world, who have acknowledged the being of God, but denied the inspiration and authenticity of the bible. These have been called deists. Among these, there have been men of celebrity for learning and talents, which they have of often displayed in their infidel writings. And there is another and more numerous class of men among nominal christians, who profess to believe the existence of the Deity, and the inspiration of the scriptures, but deny many, if not all the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. These are called, by the orthordox, heretics. It must be acknowledged, that some atheists, some deists, and some heretics, exhibit a fair, moral character, superior talents, great erudition, and are extensively useful in civil society. But can we suppose, that God will give up the terms of salvation, which he has proposed in the gospel, in favor of such men, any more than we can suppose, that he will give up the terms of salvation, in favor of learned and virtuous heathens. The heathens are undoubtedly as sincere in their idolatrous notions, as atheists, deists, and other erroneous men are in their heretical and unscriptural, and absurd opinions. Atheists, deists, and heretics are far more criminal, than heathens; for they resist greater light, violate stronger obligations, and exercise greater enmity and opposition to God, to Christ, to the Holy

Spirit; and to the highest good of the universe, than heathens do, or can do, in their dark and unenlightened condition. Accordingly, the apostle expressly declares that such as become atheists, deists, and heretics under the full blaze of gospel light, shall be doomed with heathens to endless punishment. He says "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." If the ignorance of the heathens, who know not God, will not save them from future and everlasting punishment, much less will the knowledge of infidels and heretics save them from the same fearful doom. There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby any can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. No other foundation can any man lay, than that which God has laid in Christ, for the salvation of sinners; and whoever build on any other foundation will find it will fail and involve them in hopeless ruin. To deny the fundamental principles of the gospel in any way, is inseparably connected with eternal destruction.

3. If God will not save the heathens, who are ignorant of the gospel, then we have no reason to imagine, that he will save any under the gospel, merely on the ground of their external obedience, morality, or virtue. There is reason to fear, that there are a great many under the light of the gospel, who are whited sepulchres, and who appear beautiful unto men, and unto themselves, whose hearts are far from God, and totally unreconciled to his character and opposed to the humiliat-

ing terms of salvation ; and yet hope and expect to be saved by their good works. But why should God save them for their mere good works, rather than Socrates, or Seneca, or Plato, or Cato, or Cicero, or any other amiable, virtuous heathens ? Or why should God save them for their exterior virtues and obedience, rather than the young man in the gospel, who had kept externally all the divine commands, or Paul, who as touching external obedience to the law, was blameless ? I know that some say, that Peter taught a different doctrine, when he said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." Peter said this, in respect to Cornelius, a Roman officer, who actually embraced the gospel. And Paul made the observation, in respect to other heathens who embrace the gospel ; "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." God will save all believers in Christ, whether Jews or gentiles, but he will save no others, however beautiful and amiable they may appear in their mere external conduct. Men may do a thousand amiable, virtuous actions, while they have not the love of God in them, and while they are total enemies to the cross of Christ, and their amiable and virtuous conduct may create that self-righteousness and self-dependence, which is the greatest obstacle to their cordially submitting to God, and relying on Christ alone for pardoning mercy. "For the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Many seem to think they are christians, because they have had christian parents, have had a

christian education, and have lived in a christian land, just as the Jews thought they were the people of God and were interested in his gracious covenant, because they were of the seed of Abraham, had been circumcised at eight days old, and had outwardly conformed to the laws of Moses, though they were inwardly enemies to the God of Israel. Paul says, he built his hopes of heaven on this false and sandy foundation; and his own deception led him to warn others against it. He tells his brethren, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart; in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." There is not, perhaps, a more common and dangerous practical opinion among the better sort of sinners, than a belief that they gain pardon and acceptance with God, by their good desires, good prayers, and good deeds, while they retain all the depravity of their hearts, and live wholly to themselves, and not to God. And they hold this deception fast and will not let it go, though they are so often and plainly told it will destroy them.

4. If God has cast off hitherto, and will continue to cast off all the heathen nations, so long as they remain heathens; then he has given and will continue to give most clear and awful displays of his amiable sovereignty in the dispensations of his grace. Those, who deny his sovereignty in personal election to eternal life, freely and fully acknowledge his sovereignty in national election to national privileges and advantages. They allow, that God granted great national favors to the Jews, which he denied to other nations, and

among these favors, his holy oracles and peculiar religious institutions and instructions. By bestowing these national favors upon the Jews, he gave them an opportunity of obtaining eternal life ; and by denying these favors to the heathen nations, he deprived them of an opportunity of securing the salvation of their souls.--- So that this national election and reprobation was inseparably connected with personal election and reprobation, and equally displayed the absolute sovereignty of God in the dispensations of grace. Accordingly, the apostle in the ninth of Romans represents this national election and reprobation as inseparably connected with personal election and reprobation. Speaking of Rebecca, the mother of Esau, and of Sarah, the mother of Jacob, he says, ("The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.) It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger.--- As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then ? Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid. For he saith unto Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore, hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth

he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" All Arminian expositors employ this remarkable passage of scripture to explain away the doctrine of personal election and divine sovereignty. They say the election here mentioned is national election, and not personal election. It is granted, that the apostle mentions national election, but only for the purpose of illustrating and proving personal election and divine sovereignty. And the argument is conclusive. For the national election of the Jews to their peculiar religious as well as civil privileges, necessarily implied their personal election, and the reprobation or exclusion of the gentiles from the national privileges of the Jews, necessarily implied their personal reprobation or exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. God elected the Jews to the means of salvation; but reprobated the gentiles to the means of destruction. And the consequence has been to the elected Jews, that some of them have been saved: and the consequence has been to the reprobated gentiles, that none of them in their gentile state, have been saved. This is a most awful and glorious display of divine *sovereignty* in the dispensations of grace. God has for ages personally

elected about one third of mankind, and personally reprobated more than two thirds to ignorance, stupidity, impenitence, and endless destruction. But notwithstanding God has given such clear and visible evidence of personal election and reprobation, by his word, and by the dispensations of his providence and grace, yet Methodists, Arminians, and multitudes of others, presume to call the great and fundamental doctrine of personal election and reprobation, *blasphemy*. Though God has told them in his word, and confirmed it by his providence, that all the heathen nations are in a state of reprobation, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world, and strangers to the promises of grace; yet under this full blaze of light, they call one of the first principles of the oracles of God, *blasphemy*. This is a demonstration how little God and the bible are known, even in the christian world.

5. If God has suffered and still suffers all the heathen nations to walk in their own way, and to live and die in the region of darkness and shadow of death, without the means of grace, and the offers and hopes of salvation; is it not strange that those who call themselves christians and with the bible in their hands, should still believe that all mankind will be saved? It seems, that they must disbelieve the history, the predictions, the promises, the threatenings, and express declarations of the bible, in order to believe the doctrine of universal salvation. Nor is this all; for it seems that they must disbelieve what they actually see and know of the present state of both the christian and heathen world The present state of this sinful and miserable world, exhibits infallible evidence, that all mankind will not be forever happy in the world to come.

So Peter argued from the past and present state of the world. He says, "If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly--the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." This perfectly agrees with the declaration in the text. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

6. It appears from what has been said, that the heathens are in a deplorable and perishing condition. They have forgotten God; they are sitting in the region and shadow of death; God has denied them the means of grace and the offers of salvation, and declared, that while they continued in the ignorance of heathenism, they shall be turned into hell and perish forever. This is the awful condition of not only a few individuals of mankind, but of whole nations and kingdoms, yea, of more than two thirds of the whole human race, who are now probationers for eternity. Is there nothing to be done, or can too much be done, to enlighten these immortal souls, that are ready to perish? On whom does this labour devolve? It certainly devolves upon the enlightened christian worlds whom God has chosen to the means of salvation. It is in their power to be workers together with God, in fulfilling his gracious promises to Christ and to his church, that "the

fulness of the gentiles shall be brought in." These heathen nations are to be found in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; and it particularly devolves upon Europeans to enlighten the European, Asiatic, and African heathens; and upon American christians to enlighten American heathens. Wisdom and benevolence require us to exert ourselves to the utmost, to enlighten and gospelize the heathen nations on our borders; and to spare no pains nor expense to spread divine knowledge among them, both by the bible, and the preachers of the gospel. Much is doing, and more must be done.

7. If the heathens are in a deplorable condition, how much more deplorable is the condition of the impenitent and unbelieving in this enlightened age and enlightened land! God has chosen them to the most important external privileges and favours, that he ever has chosen, or can choose to bestow on any nation in the world. The religious privileges, which he granted to the Jews, were the greatest in kind that he ever bestowed upon them, by which he distinguished them from all the other nations of the earth. So the apostle expressly declares. He asks and answers this question: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." The same oracles, with the addition of the whole New-Testament, has been given to our nation, in distinction from the whole heathen world. Here God has been constantly pouring divine instructions into the minds of all, who have been willing to read, or hear the gospel. How then, can any of us complain of the doctrine of national and personal elec-

tion? He has actually chosen us to the great and infinitely important privileges of both. He has brought the kingdom of heaven, as near to us, as he can bring it, and invited, and commanded us to come in, and partake of all the spiritual and eternal blessings contained in it. How criminal and inexcusable must any of us be, if we neglect so great salvation? Must not any finally impenitent and unbelieving sinner in this land and in this place, be far more criminal and inexcusable, than any heathen in Tyre, or Sidon, or Ninevah, or Sodom, and Gomorrah, or in Asia, Europe, Africa, or America, and deserve a heavier doom?

SERMON III.

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

ROMANS XI. 15—*For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

The rejection of the Jews for rejecting the gospel was a deplorable event. It deeply affected the heart of the apostle, who sincerely lamented their sad condition. But there were three things, which afforded him some consolation in the view of it. The first was, that they were not all cast away. The second was, that their rejection was the occasion of spreading the gospel among the gentiles. And the third was, that they should be, in some future period, called in, and made instrumental of enlarging the church of Christ. This last ground of consolation is mentioned in the text. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" This plainly intimates,

That the calling in of the Jews will be productive of great and happy effects. I shall,

I. Show that the Jews will be called in, and,

II. Mention some of the great and happy effects, which will flow from this event.

I. I am to show that the Jews will be called in. God has dispersed them all over the world, and therefore his calling them in must imply, not only the tak-

ing away of the veil from their hearts, and causing them to embrace the gospel, but also his restoring them to their own land. These two things are intimately connected together, and cannot be separated any more than means and ends, cause and effect. That they shall thus be prepared for, and finally be gathered into their native land, will clearly appear from the following considerations.

1. This event is plainly and repeatedly foretold in the scriptures of truth. The apostle, in the text and context, mentions the restoration of the Jews. He demands "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" And he goes on to say, "and they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits. That blindness, in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet now have obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy." The apostle here argues the restoration of the Jews, upon the ground of the promise to Abraham, and represents it to be as certain, that the Jews should,

in some future period, embrace the gospel, as that the gentiles already had embraced it: or in other words, that it is as certain the Jews shall be called in, as that they have been cut off. If we now look back into the Old Testament, we shall find, that the prophets, who foretold dispersion of the Jews, have as plainly predicted their future conversion and restoration. In the twenty-seventh chapter of Isaiah we read, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, who are ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts of the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain in Jerusalem." We find a prediction similar to this in the eleventh chapter of Ezekiel. "Thus saith the Lord God; although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather them from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof from them. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Another plain prediction

of this event we find in the first chapter of Hosea.---"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured, nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel," or seed of God. The restoration of the Jews is still more literally foretold by the prophet Amos. By him God says, "I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they also shall make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land, which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." The prophet Zechariah not only predicts the return of the Jews to their own land, but also describes the purity of their worship after their return. He says, "Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited—Yea, every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seeth therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." These are a few of the many predictions of the prophets concerning the future conversion and restoration of the Jews. I might cite many more passages, and even chapters in favour of the Jews being called in, but those I have read, are sufficient to establish the point, so far as predictions unfulfilled can establish it.

2. The remarkable preservation of the Jews, in their state of dispersion, confirms the predictions which have been cited, and affords a strong presumptive evidence of their future restoration. They have been scattered among all nations for almost two thousand years, and yet remain a distinct people, totally unconnected with all others, in their modes of living and rites of worship. This cannot be accounted for, by the common principles of human nature, nor by the example of any other nation in the world. All other conquered nations have, in time, lost their laws, their customs, their manners, and their religion, and become blended with their conquerors. Hence the preservation of the Jews, for so many ages, and in so many parts of the world, as a distinct nation, must be ascribed to the peculiar care of providence. For some reason or other, God has preserved and distinguished the seed of Abraham amidst all the wars and revolutions in the world. And what other reason can be assigned for this singular interposition of providence, but the divine purpose of restoring them to their native land? This, indeed, is a good reason why they should be preserved, and kept from mingling with any other nation. In this view, they have been ever since their dispersion, a standing monument of the truth of God in his predictions, and of the faithfulness of God in his promise to Abraham. His extraordinary conduct towards this people for more than eighteen hundred years past, has been an occular demonstration to the world, that he intends to collect them into one body, and lead them back to the land of their nativity. And this is further confirmed,

3. By their peculiar circumstances, as well as by their past preservation. They never have been per-

mitted to own any particular country, or to establish any particular government, but always have been subjected to the laws and revolutions of the nations among whom they have been dispersed. And though they have generally enjoyed the temporal blessing of Abraham, yet their wealth has always consisted in personal and not in landed property. So that they have no partial attachment to any particular place, or people, or government; but constantly stand ready to march to Judea, whenever providence shall open the way for their return to the land of their fathers' sepulchres.—They are now as completely prepared to return from every place and nation where they live, as they were to return from their Babylonish captivity in the days of Ezra. And they are waiting and longing for the promised Messiah to appear at their head, and lead them in triumph to their native land. Whenever, therefore, God shall take the veil from their hearts, and cause them to look upon him whom their fathers pierced, with a believing and penitent eye, they will undoubtedly confide in the promise to Abraham, and form a strong and irresistable resolution to surmount all obstacles, and force their way through all nations to the land of promise. This, the predictions, the promises, and the providence of God all conspire to put beyond doubt. I now proceed to mention,

II. Some of the great and happy effects, which will flow from this event. Though we are in a great measure ignorant of the ways and means, by which God will gather his ancient people from the various and distant places of their dispersion, and conduct them to their own land, which is now inhabited by their most inveterate and inhuman enemies; yet we must conclude,

that this extraordinary event cannot be brought about, without producing great and happy effects. It must certainly make a very sensible impression upon all the nations from which they are taken; and indeed, upon all other nations, who will necessarily become acquainted with such a signal interposition of providence. Besides, we must suppose, that God will answer some important purposes, by means of their conversion and restoration; for he always has made them instrumental of carrying into effect his wise and gracious designs. Here then it may be observed,

1. That the restoration of the Jews to their own land, will greatly confirm the truth of divine revelation. There are more particular and express predictions concerning the restoration of the Jews, than concerning any other event foretold in the Old and New Testament. And whenever this event shall take place, it will be more easy to discern the agreement between the predictions and their accomplishment, than it has been in any other case whatever. It will be an occular accomplishment, and such as all men, whether learned or unlearned, are equally able to understand. With regard to the fulfilment of many divine predictions, wise and good men differ in opinion. Some supposing there has been, and others supposing there has not been an accomplishment of them. But when the Jews shall be actually called in, and put into possession of Judea, all men will be united in the belief, that this great and astonishing event is a complete fulfilment of all the predictions respecting the seed of Abraham. The nature of this event, the long time it had been predicted, the multitude of predictions respecting it, and the great and numerous obstacles in the way of

bringing it to pass, will all serve to confirm the truth of prophesy, and the inspiration of the whole canon of scripture. This event will unite the testimony of all nations and all events for two thousand years together, in favour of divine revelation. It will strike learned and unlearned infidels dumb, in every part of the world, where the Jews had resided, and from which they shall be taken and carried to the holy land, where Christ was crucified, and where the gospel of his grace was first published. Nor will this event give less evidence of the truth of christianity to Mahometans than to infidels. It must carry conviction to all men, that the bible is the word of God, and christianity the only true and divine religion. In this view, the restoration of the Jews is a most desirable event; and it may become still more important before it takes place, by reason of the great spread of infidelity among the nations called christian. It is not improbable, that the Jews will be converted and restored at the very time that infidelity shall rise to its height and threaten the entire extinction of christianity. How happy for the world will it be, if the restoration of the Jews should silence atheists, deists, and all descriptions of infidels, and establish the truth of divine revelation in the minds of all unbelievers.

2. The restoration of the Jews will not only confirm the truth of divine revelation, but awaken all nations from their long infatuation and stupidity, and fix their attention on the great realities of the future and eternal world. This is more than intimated by the apostle, who says, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the gentiles; how much more their fulness?

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" According to this lively representation, the restoration of the Jews shall have a greater tendency to convert mankind to christianity, than their dispersion had. And we know that their dispersion broke down the middle wall of partition between them and the gentile world, and opened the way for spreading the gospel far and wide among other nations. The same effect, but in a greater degree, shall be produced, the apostle tells us, by their restoration. As their dispersion was a means of reconciling the world to God, so their restoration shall be a greater means of enlightening and converting sinners among all nations. Their conversion and restoration shall be like life from the dead to those sitting in the regions of the shadow of death. And this may be greatly owing to the methods God may employ to bring about their restoration. It is supposed by many, that he will convert them to the belief and love of the gospel, in the places where they are dispersed, before he collects them together and conducts them to Jerusalem, where they formerly celebrated divine ordinances. And should this be the case, their views, and feelings, and character, and faith in the promises, must have a powerful tendency to awaken the attention of all nations to the being, perfections, laws and government of God, and to the gospel of Christ. Should they return to their own country mourning and rejoicing, they will solemnly reprove the infidelity, stupidity and criminality of the gospelized world. The prophet Zechariah represents them as returning in this manner and producing this great and happy effect. "Thus saith the

Lord, I am returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain. Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country, and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." Besides, it is thought God will not only pour out his Spirit upon his people, and bring them to embrace the gospel, before he carries them to Judea; but that he will conduct them thither, by a series of great and signal dispensations of providence. And should he do this, it will have a powerful tendency to alarm the world, and convince them of the reality and importance of true religion, and serve to raise multitudes from spiritual death to spiritual life. This leads me to observe,

3. That the conversion and restoration of the Jews will have a direct and happy tendency to bring on the latter day glory. There is abundant evidence in scripture, that the time is coming, when the gospel shall spread, and the kingdom of Christ shall extend through all the earth. God has promised to give unto Christ "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." God says by Isaiah, "It shall come pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Daniel, in

explaining Nebuchadnezzar's dream, says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but shall brake in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." St. John tells us, that when the seventh angel sounded, "there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." And again he says, "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled."--- Upon those predictions, and such as these, there is good ground to believe, that satan shall be bound, and Christ shall reign a thousand years, and the world, during that long period, shall become not only nominal, but real christians. And since this glorious day will be brought on by the instrumentality of men and means, there is reason to think, the conversion and restoration of the Jews will prepare the way for it. It is highly probable, that their conversion and restoration will be one of the last steps God will take, to promote universal peace and prosperity in the christian church. It is easy to see how the conversion and return of the Jews will many ways facilitate the universal spread of the gospel. And there is no doubt they will be as much engaged to spread the gospel, as they ever had been to oppose it. They may be the means of throw-

ing much light upon both the Old and New Testament, not only in respect to divine predictions, but in respect to many difficulties which have puzzled not only the enemies, but the friends of divine revelation.--- The same changes and revolutions, which will prepare the way for their return, will equally prepare the way for carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. Their return, therefore, the apostle represents as the fulness of the gentiles, who will then be united with them ; and so all Israel shall be saved ; that is, the whole number of God's elect, who are his spiritual Israel. These are some of the great and happy effects of the conversion and restoration of the Jews. And if these should be produced by the calling in of that long lost people, their conversion to the gospel will be more beneficial to the cause of Christ, than their opposition to it, has been detrimental. Their return will be emphatically like life from the dead to the stupid, unbelieving, perishing world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said concerning the restoration of the Jews, that there is a growing evidence in favor of the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Many of us can remember the time, when the bible was almost universally allowed to be the word of God, and given by divine inspiration ; but of late years, not a few have risen up, who profess to disbelieve the divinity of the scriptures, and freely call them a cunningly devised fable. But it seems to be too late in the day to disbelieve and dispute the divine authority of the bible, which has stood the test of both the learned

and the unlearned world for ages; and especially, since the evidences of its divinity have been constantly and rapidly increasing, by the fulfilling of prophecies. It must be allowed, that miracles and prophecies are the two highest kinds of external evidence, that can be given in favour of divine inspiration. God gave both these kinds of credentials to those, whom he employed to write the bible, and to deliver his messages to mankind. The evidence of miracles has ceased; but the evidence of prophesy has been continued and increased from the day, that God foretold that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, to the present time. Through this long period of nearly six thousand years, the fulfilling of divine predictions has been continually accumulating new and higher evidences of the truth and authenticity of the bible: or that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." A great many of their predictions have been actually and visibly fulfilled. The prediction concerning the deluge has been fulfilled. The prediction concerning Jacob and his family's going into Egypt, has been fulfilled. The prediction concerning the destruction of the king of Egypt and the return of the children of Israel to Canaan, has been fulfilled. The prediction of the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel, has been fulfilled. The prediction of the captivity of the two tribes in Babylon, and their return at the end of seventy years, has been fulfilled. The numerous predictions of the coming, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, have been fulfiled. Christ's predictions concerning the spread of the gospel, the destruction of the temple, the cutting

off and dispersion of the Jews, have been, and still are fulfilling. The prediction concerning the Ishmaelites, has been, and still is fulfilling. The predictions of the utter extinction of the seven churches of Asia, have been fulfilled. The predictions concerning the rise and fall of the Mahometans, and the predictions concerning the rise and fall of the Man of sin, have been and still are fulfilling. These are some of the most important events that ever have taken place, or ever will take place, from the beginning to the end of time. They have been intimately connected, as causes and effects of one another, and at the same time connected with all other events that have not been foretold, and that might, for aught the prophets knew, defeat their predictions. The prophets, who foretold these events, lived in different parts, and in different ages of the world, so that they could not combine together to form a scheme to deceive mankind. The accomplishment, therefore, of their predictions concerning such distant, numerous, and important events, amounts to a moral demonstration, that they were divinely inspired. The evidence of miracles in favor of the divine inspiration of the scriptures is continually decreasing; but the evidence arising from the fulfilment of prophecies is continually increasing, and will continue to grow stronger and stronger till all the predictions in the bible are completely fulfilled. If we look into the bible and read the predictions there, and then look into sacred and profane history, and read the fulfilment and fulfilling of them there, the evidence in favor of the divine inspiration of the scriptures must appear irresistible. There is no reasoning against fact. The burden of proof lies on those, who call in question

the inspiration of the sacred oracles. It would be an herculean labor for any one to undertake to prove, that there was no such man as Abraham, who is mentioned in profane, as well as sacred history; or to prove that his seed did not once possess the land of Canaan; or to prove that they did not build a magnificent temple, which was once destroyed and rebuilt; or to prove that Jerusalem was not destroyed by Titus; or that the Jews are not still dispersed all over the world; or that Christ was not crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; or that his professed followers did not propagate his religion; or that Papists and Mahometans have not opposed and persecuted them. But until these facts are disproved, the evidences, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, must stand in their full and irresistible force. And if they need any further corroborating support, it is continually increasing by the present state of Mahometans, Ishmaelites, Jews, and christians.

2. The sovereignty of God appears, as plainly from his conduct towards his peculiar people, as from his declarations in his word. His sovereignty consists in giving and denying temporal and spiritual favors to whom he pleases. He claims a right to do what he will with his own. He claims a right to give temporal favors to one and not to another, and to give spiritual blessings to one and not to another, and to soften the heart of one and to harden the heart of another. Such declarations of his amiable and awful sovereignty we find every where in his word. But many endeavor to explain away these declarations of his sovereignty, as being inconsistent with his moral rectitude and the essential perfections of his nature.---

There would indeed be great plausibility in giving such a construction to his claims of absolute sovereignty, if he had never acted it out. But it appears from the whole history of his conduct towards Abraham and his posterity, that he exercised the most absolute sovereignty towards them. He promised to give to Abraham and to his seed such temporal and spiritual blessings, as he denied to mankind in general. In Abraham's family, he preferred Isaac to Ishmael. In Isaac's family, he preferred Jacob to Esau. Moses was preferred to Aaron in his father's family. In the twelve tribes, Judah and Benjamin were preferred before the other ten tribes. And taking the whole nation together, how often did God for ages, destroy kings and kingdoms, to promote their temporal and spiritual peace, safety, and prosperity. He distinguished them in all these respects, from every other nation on the face of the earth. And though for a long time past, he has scattered them through the world and subjected them to the scorn, derision, and tyranny of other nations, yet he has exercised a particular providence over them, by which they are preparing, in time to come, to stand again as his peculiar people at the head of the religious world. God's conduct towards his people Israel, illustrates and establishes his sovereignty, not only in national, but personal election and reprobation. This appears from what the apostle says in the ninth of Romans. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I

hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Those, who deny the doctrine of personal election and reprobation, acknowledge the doctrine of national election and reprobation. But the apostle supposed this to be inconsistent; for he makes use of the doctrine of national election and reprobation to prove the doctrine of personal election and reprobation; and he proves both doctrines from the conduct of God towards Abraham and his seed. And we know, that God did in fact, soften the hearts of Moses, Aaron, and other pious Israelites, while he hardened the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; and that he softened the hearts of Caleb and Joshua, while he hardened the hearts of the Canaanites and of many Israelites that fell in the wilderness. There is not a plainer truth in the bible, than this; that God not only professes to act, but does act as an absolute sovereign in bestowing and denying temporal favours, and in softening and hardening the hearts of men.

3. If the Jews shall be called in, and their restoration shall produce such great and happy effects as have been mentioned; then we may safely conclude, that God is as really promoting the prosperity of the

church in general, at one time as at another. Zion has often thought that her God had forsaken her; and the children of Zion very often imagine, that God is not only slow, but negligent in carrying into effect his gracious designs towards the church. But God, by all his apparently retrograde movements, is actually promoting the great interests of his kingdom as fast as possible. He was as really fulfilling his promise to Abraham, while his seed were four hundred years in bondage, as while he was pouring down his blessings upon them in the land of promise. God has as constantly and irresistibly carried on his cause, since the casting away of the Jews, as before; since the rise of Mahomet and the Man of sin, as before, and since the prevalence of the grossest errors and delusions in the christian world, as before. God is never slack, as men count slackness, in carrying into effect the great purposes of his grace. God promotes the fruitfulness of the earth, by cold as well as by heat, by darkness as well as by light, just so, he promotes the prosperity of the church by all the opposition made to its growth and enlargement. By all past errors, delusions, idolatries, and infidelity among Jews and gentiles, God has been preparing the way as fast as possible for the conversion and restoration of the Jews, and for the conversion of all nations to the belief and love of the gospel; and for the ruin of his incorrigible enemies. They have been saying and are still saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The methods which God is employing to promote his gracious designs are as well suited to try the hearts of saints, as the hearts of sinners. The darkness

and the light, which now attend the operations of divine providence, have a direct tendency to awaken the hopes and fears of both the friends and enemies of Christ. Accordingly, we find an uncommon zeal and exertion on both sides. This zeal and exertions will probably rise to a much higher degree, to prepare the way for the conversion and restoration of the Jews, for the destruction of their enemies, and for the suppression of all opposition to the cause of truth. The friends of Christ have no just ground to murmur or despond at the apparently slow movements of the wheels of providence, nor his enemies to hope and triumph. In due time, the Jews will be restored and converted, the gospel will spread and prevail, errors and delusions will be detected and destroyed, and the enemies of all righteousness will either embrace the truth, or perish in their strong delusions.

4. If the Jews shall be called in; then we cannot expect any long settled peace among the nations of the earth, till that great event shall take place. It cannot be brought about in an ordinary way, without disturbing the peace and harmony of all nations where they principally reside, and through whom they must make their way to Judea, which is in the possession of the Mahometans, who are very numerous and powerful. They are equal enemies to Jews and christians, and firmly attached to their strong and pleasing delusions. No moral means will have the least tendency to convince them of the their errors or dispose them to embrace christianity. They will risk their lives before they will give their religion and government, which are inseparably connected. It would require an immensely numerous and powerful army to sub-

due them, if they should stand alone; but they undoubtedly would, if they found it necessary, call in the assistance of other deluded, idolatrous nations. All false religions can unite against the true. It is not to to be supposed, that the Mahometans can be conquered without spreading war and desolation among the whole eastern world. And should a general war break out there, it would directly or indirectly affect all Europe, if not America. It will require great convulsions and revolutions in the christian, as well as in the heathen world to purge them of their errors and delusions in theory and practice. There must be a vast deal of hay and stubble burnt up, before the primitive purity of christianity can be introduced into the nominal churches of Christ. But they will be more loth to give up error than truth. There is no just ground to expect, that the Jews will be called in, and the millenium will be brought on, by the mild means of mere moral motives. God has commonly protected, built up, and enlarged his church, by employing the sword to destroy its enemies. His people made their way to the land of Canaan by the force of arms, and took possession of it by destroying and subduing the original inhabitants of it. The reformation from popery was brought about, by long and bloody wars in the states of Germany, and the churches in this country owe their origin, their preservation, and enlargements to a series of wars and revolutions among christians and heathens. God has always seen it necessary to promote his own cause, by the dreadful means of wars and fightings. And there is every reason to expect, that he will still continue to employ these means to answer the same purpose, till all the hostile nations of the

earth lay down their arms, and cease to oppose the kingdom of the Prince of peace. Though some suppose the millenium has already commenced, and will soon be peaceably ushered in ; yet their opinion does not appear to be well founded upon any thing God has said in his word, or has done in his providence. Wars and rumors of wars are still sounding in our ears ; and and in respect to those nations in particular, who will probably destroy one another to prepare the way for the restoration of the Jews. It concerns the friends of God to prepare for the fiery trials, that may await them.

5. It appears from what has been said, that we have as much reason to believe the Jews will be eventually restored to their native country, as they had to believe the coming, incarnation, sufferings, and death of Christ, before his appearance in the flesh. There was a multitude of plain predictions in the Old Testament concerning the person, life and death of Christ, which the Jews ought to have believed before he appeared, and especially after he had appeared, suffered, and died. But there are as many plain predictions both in the Old and New Testament concerning the restoration of the Jews after their long dispersion. And there are no more apparent difficulties in the way of their returning to their native land, than there were in the way of Christ's coming into the world. But christians have been very unbelieving in respect to their return. Their unbelief of that remote event has become proverbial. If we hear any one say, that such or such event will not take place till the Jews come, we understand him to mean, that such an event never will come to pass.--- Such unbelief of the plain and numerous predictions of the conversion and restoration of the Jews, has led

christian nations to despise and abuse that ancient and and once venerable nation. This feeling and conduct is a species of infidelity, highly reproachful to those who profess to believe the bible, in which there are such great and precious promises in favor of God's peculiar people. It is true, they deserve to be despised and neglected, for their despising and neglecting the heathens so long, and viewing themselves as the only nation worthy of the notice and favour of God. Even the apostles, at first, supposed the gospel was sent exclusively to the Jews, and that salvation was of the Jews only. But this is no excuse for gentile christians, who neglect, despise, and abuse them almost every where. But,

6. Since God has plainly told us, that he intends to deliver them from their low and depressed state, and carry them back to their native land, and put them into the possession of all the privileges and blessings of the gospel, we ought to desire and do all we can to bring about that great and happy event. We believe, that the gospel makes no distinction between Jew and gentile, and that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. It appears from what has been said, that their conversion and restoration will be a rich and extensive blessing to the world, and like life from the dead to us, as well as to them. It is, therefore, a most important and desirable event. Paul viewed it in this light; "Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." He says again, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be sav-

ed: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not *believed*, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." We are much indebted to the Jews, who prepared the way for the coming, incarnation, and atoning death of Christ, and for spreading the gospel far and wide by the apostles, who were descendants of the Hebrews, the seed of Abraham. We have received unspeakable benefits from their being, for a while, cast away, and are promised still greater benefits from their predicted restoration. We ought sincerely to desire this great and glorious event, and to unite in our exertions with those, who are forming societies and using means to bring it to pass. The christian nations at the present day, seem to have a greater tenderness for the Turks than for the Jews, and are unwilling to disturb them, for the sake of delivering the Jews from their despotic and cruel hands. But this is probably a work, which they ought to do, and are destined to do. There is no ground to expect the restoration of the Jews, without the aid and assistance of the christian world. And if the Jews are to be restored before the commencement of the millenium, it is time for christians to be awake and alive to the great and arduous work they have to do, and to prepare themselves for it. And they

will not prepare themselves for it, until they attend to and believe the divine predictions concerning God's peculiar, chosen, and beloved people, who are groaning for deliverance from the cruelty and oppression of an ungrateful and unbelieving world.

Finally, this subject teaches us the indispensable obligation, we are under to believe, and love, and obey the sacred oracles, which the Jews so long preserved, and at length conveyed to us gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. The apostle asks, "What advantage hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" He replies, "Much every way: chiefly because that unto them, were committed the oracles of God." These we have more fully and completely in our hands, than the Jews ever had. By these we are highly favored above the Jews, who have only the Old Testament in their hands; and above all the pagan world, who are totally destitute of divine revelation, and perishing for the lack of knowledge. Our obligations to embrace the gospel, are as great as the blessings which are promised to all who do embrace it. Those who disbelieve and reject the gospel, not only forfeit all the blessings it offers to their choice, but expose themselves to an aggravated condemnation for resisting the light and force of divine truth, which renders them far more guilty than the unenlightened heathens. So our Saviour said to them, who heard and rejected the gospel he preached, "Wo unto thee, Chorazin; wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in

Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you."

SERMON IV.

THE PARENTAL GOVERNMENT OF A FAMILY.

GENESIS XVIII. 19—*I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

Abraham was one of the excellent of the earth.--- He believed in the being and perfections of the true God, and placed an unshaken confidence in him, while his father and friends and the world in general fell into gross idolatry. His faith produced cordial obedience and submission to the will of God. For by faith, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, he obeyed ; and went out, not knowing whither he went. In return, God exercised corresponding love to him and confidence in him. He condescended to make a new and everlasting covenant with him, and engaged to be his God, and the God of his seed, from generation to generation. After he had formed this intimate and important connection with him, he considered and treated him, as his peculiar friend. For when he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ? For I know him, that he will com-

mand his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." God here expresses full confidence in Abraham, that he would exercise parental authority over his family with propriety and fidelity. This representation of Abraham, naturally leads us,

I. To consider who they are, that compose a family;

II. To consider what is implied in exercising parental authority over a family; And,

III. To consider the importance of exercising parental authority over a family.

I. We are to consider who they are, that compose a family. Some families are smaller and some are larger than others. Families are usually composed of parents and their children, which are sometimes less and sometimes more numerous. But parents may have other children and youths committed to their care and instruction, and those equally belong to their family.--- Besides their own and other children, they may have those, whom they employ in their service and who reside in their house; and these all belong to their family. They may also have some persons, whom they invite to reside with them gratuitously. These likewise belong to the family. In a word, all whom they permit to enter under their roof for pleasure, entertainment, protection, or relief, belong to their family, for the time being. Parents are heads of their families, whether larger or smaller, and whether they are composed of persons of different ages, characters, and conditions, or not. Their parental authority extends to every individual of their family. Abraham had a very numerous family, com-

posed of persons of various ages, characters, and conditions. He had six sons beside Ishmael and Isaac. He had three hundred servants born in his house, and some that he bought with his money. Over all these he exercised paternal authority. For we read, "In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son, and all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him." All parents, or heads of families have the same parental authority over their children and households, that Abraham had. Parental authority is founded in the nature of things, and discoverable by the light of nature. The natural dependance of children upon their parents, gives their parents a natural right to govern them so long as that dependance continues; and children early see and feel the propriety and obligation of submitting to such parental authority. Parental authority is as fully and universally claimed by parents, and acknowledged by children, among heathens as among christians. All heathen parents, whether civilized or savage, are capable of seeing that they ought to govern their children and households; and their children and households are capable of seeing that they ought to submit to their government. And this parental authority, which is founded in the nature of things, is sanctioned by divine authority. God commands parents to govern, and children and households to obey. Parents are bound to their children, and their children are bound to them. Their mutual relations create mutual obligations, which are mutually binding, and cannot be violated on either side without incurring great guilt. The origin, the nature and the obligation of parental authority all show how

far it extends, and how long it continues. It extends to all that belong to a family or household, and it continues to bind them so long as it can be of service to them, or so long as the civil law allows it to bind them. The law of nature, the law of God, and the civil law generally agree in this, to allow parents to exercise their parental authority over their children and households, until their age, their knowledge, and circumstances render them capable of self-direction, which may be at various periods of life. Having considered who they are, that compose a family or household, over whom parental authority is to be exercised, I proceed consider,

II. What is implied in parental authority, or what it gives parents a right to do in respect to their children and households. And here it may be observed,

1. That it gives them the right of dedicating them to God. Abraham possessed and exercised this right. "When Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to him, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee. Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, ever man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is

bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised." Agreeably to this divine command, Abraham exercised his parental authority over all his children and numerous households, whether born in his house or purchased with his money and caused them the same day to be circumcised. This was a solemn dedication of them to God, by a solemn ceremony. Though the rite of circumcision be abolished, yet parents still have authority to dedicate their children and households to God, by the rite of baptism. Parents have the same right to devote themselves, their children, and their households to God, under the gospel, that Abraham had to devote himself, his children, and his household to God before the gospel day. Accordingly, we read, that Lydia and her household, and the Jailor and all his were baptized. And household baptism has been practised in the christian church ever since. One thing therefore, implied in parental authority, is a right in parents to devote their children and households to God, by baptism.

2. Parental authority gives parents the right of instructing their children, as well as the right of devoting them to God. This right God says he knew Abraham would exercise in commanding his children, and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. He had before this obeyed the divine command to devote his children and household to God, by which he had bound himself to teach them their duty to remember their creator and pay a universal obedience to all his precepts and prohibitions. We may be sure, therefore, that he did not neglect to employ his authority, his knowledge, his wisdom, and his fidelity in bringing up

his children and household in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. Moses enjoined the same duty upon the parents in Israel. He said unto them, "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Solomon inculcates the same duty upon parents.--- "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." And the apostle exhorts parents "to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Mankind are born like the wild ass's colt, ignorant of God and divine things, and unwilling to learn their duty to God and man. It is therefore, the proper right and business of parents to instruct their children and all under their care, in the duties of piety, morality, and of every thing decent, and amiable in the sight of God and man.--- Their parental authority obliges them to use all the means in their power, both by instruction and example, to form their children and households to virtue, piety, and usefulness. It must be further observed,

3. That parental authority gives parents a right to restrain, as well as to instruct their children and households. Children and youth are naturally inclined to vanity and vice, from which they need to be guarded and restrained, not only by instruction, admonition, and advice, but by proper authority. It is the duty of parents to command, as well as to instruct and reprove.

God knew, that Abraham would have occasion to command his children and household ; and that he would command with authority and effect. A right to command always implies a power and right to enforce obedience. A command always implies a penalty of some kind or other, in case of disobedience. A parental precept, like every other lawful precept, always contains a penalty either expressed or understood. And parents always have the same right to inflict a just penalty, as to give a just precept or command. The bible, which gives parents authority over their children and households, allows and even requires them to exercise that authority, both by precept and penalty. Solomon says "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child ; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." Again he says, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Again he says, "Withhold not correction from the child : for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.--- Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell." Again he says, "Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest : yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." It is not, indeed, always necessary, nor even proper for the parents to correct by the rod. There are many other ways in which they may express displeasure towards any of their froward children and household, which is the proper design of all punishment. To deny or take away a darling object may serve the same purpose as the rod. Or, on greater occasions, to deny some peculiar favor or privilege, may be a sufficient restraint. But in some way or other, parents are bound to restrain their children and household from every evil practice, or sinful course. When

instruction, warning, and admonition fail to restrain them, they must use more powerful and coercive means, which are sufficient to produce the desired effect. Though Eli used the milder means to govern his family, and restrain them from evil, which proved ineffectual; yet God blamed him for neglecting to exercise the power he had to restrain them effectually.--- As all parents have authority to command and to punish all under their government; so God will require it at their hands, if they neglect to instruct and restrain their children and households. It now remains to show,

III. The importance of exercising parental authority.

This will appear, if we consider the great and happy consequences, which family government tends to promote.

1. Family government directly tends to promote family religion. This is plainly intimated in the text. God foresaw that Abraham's children and household would keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment, that is, become pious, virtuous, and useful, because he would properly command, instruct, and restrain them; or in other words; give them a pious and religious education. Accordingly, we find that family religion was the happy effect of his wise and faithful family government. His children and household were truly religious. He instructed, governed, and restrained Ishmael until he was thirteen years old, and then devoted him to God, by the right of circumcision.--- Though after this, Ishmael conducted ill, which constrained Abraham to command him to leave his house; yet he did not cease to love and pray for him, with tender paternal affection. He said unto God,

"O that Ishmael might live before thee." This prayer was undoubtedly heard and answered. So that we have just ground to believe, that Ishmael was a good man. And we know that Isaac was. Whether all his household were pious, we are not told. But one of his servants, whom he sent to Laban upon an important errand, appears to have been not only faithful, but truly pious. It was Abraham's primary object in the government of his numerous family to promote their piety, and he employed the most proper means to obtain the important end he had in view. He walked before God with a perfect heart. He devoted his children and household to God according to his own institution. He employed his parental authority in teaching and restraining all under his command. And he had the great satisfaction to see his children and household keeping the ways of the Lord, doing justice and judgment, and becoming useful and happy in the world. Other pious parents have pursued the same method and employed the same means to promote family religion, and happily succeeded. The pious parents of Samuel gave him a pious education, which appears to have been the means of his eminent piety and usefulness. Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous, and walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They dedicated their son John to the Lord in the way he had appointed, instructed and restrained him, and instrumentally qualified him to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, and the commencement of the gospel dispensation.—There is nothing, that has a greater tendency to promote family religion, than the proper exercise of parental authority in respect to the dedication, instruc-

tion, and restraint of children and households. If parents neglect to exercise their rightful authority over their families, they will find it morally impossible to instruct and restrain them properly. Where can you find an instance of family religion, where family government is neglected ? It is true, there were saints in Cesar's household, and there may be pious individuals, where parental authority is not properly exercised ; but these are rare instances. Nevertheless, it is the natural tendency of family government to promote family religion. Whenever we find religious parents, who give up their children and households to God, and instruct, and restrain them, there we generally find vital piety to prevail more or less, and those under their care early devoting themselves to God, and walking with the wise in the ways of wisdom, righteousness and peace. The proper exercise of parental authorty is, therefore, very important, as it directly tends to promote family religion.

2. The proper exercise of parental authority is highly important, as it tends to propagate religion from generation to generation, throughout the world.--- This God mentions as the great and happy effect of Abraham's fidelity in exercising his parental authority over his family and household. " And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him ;" which was,

that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed, in consequence of his propagating religion through the world. By Abraham's commanding his children and his household, to keep the way of the Lord, he propagated religion in the family of Isaac. Isaac propagated religion in the family of Jacob. Jacob propagated religion in the families of his twelve sons. They propagated religion until their posterity became a great and mighty nation. That great and mighty nation propagated religion from the time they took possession of Canaan, till the coming of Christ. And the twelve apostles, who were of the seed of Abraham, propagated religion in all nations until this day, and will be the instrument of propagating it to the end of the world. God always has propagated, and always will propagate religion from family to family, by the instrumentality of pious parents, who devote their children and household to him, and properly exercise their parental authority over them, by precept, example, and restraint. You can now find but a very few pious parents, who were not born, educated, and devoted to God in infancy, under the proper exercise of parental authority. We every where see religion generally flowing from family to family, by means of family government. It is greatly owing to family government, that children and youth read the bible, observe the sabbath, and attend public worship, and those means of instruction, which God usually blesses to the conviction, conversion, and salvation of sinners. What then can be of greater importance, than the proper exercise of parental authority and family government? It is no less important than the propagation of religion, from generation to generation, through the world to

the end of time ; and this is no less important than the salvation of myriads and myriads of mankind, whom God has given to his Son. It appears from common observation, that when family government declines, religion declines with it from family to family, who become more and more irreligious. It is of infinite importance, that these fatal consequences should be prevented, and according to the common course of things, nothing but the revival of family government, will prevent such a declension of religion. Whether you look backward, or look forward ; whether you look into your own or other families, you cannot help seeing the vast importance of family government, which is the mighty means of instructing, restraining, and converting mankind. These observations will not become less, but more weighty, the more seriously and attentively you consider the worth of your own souls, and of the souls of your descendants from generation to generation to the end of time. If family government be maintained, or if it be neglected, it cannot fail of producing infinitely important consequences, with respect to all the familes of the earth. Furthermore,

3. The proper exercise of parental authority directly tends to promote both temporal and spiritual prosperity. It produced both these great and happy effects upon Abraham and his posterity. Abraham was rich. Isaac was rich. Jacob was rich. And the whole Jewish nation were rich, while they remained in the land given to their fathers ; and individuals still continue to be proverbially rich. There never was a more prosperous nation than the Jews, for nearly two thousand years. Their flocks and herds were extremely numerous, and their land brought forth in handfuls.---

These temporal blessings God bestowed upon them, out of respect to the piety and faithfulness of their father Abraham, and their other pious and faithful parents. But these were only minor favors. God granted them a rich profusion of spiritual and divine blessings. He circumcised their hearts to love the Lord their God supremely, to walk in his ways, and to promote his glory. There never was before, nor has there been since, a more religious people, than the seed of Abraham, whom God chose for his own peculiar people. In the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived Joshua, and in the days of David, Solomon, and other pious princes, pure religion greatly flourished and prevailed. And though there were some general declensions from time to time, yet they continued the only nation in the world, that maintained the true religion until the gospel day. It was owing to the proper exercise of parental authority, that these infinitely rich spiritual blessings were transmitted from Abraham down to Zacharias and Elizabeth, who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and by the proper exercise of their parental authority, trained up their only son to be the most eminently pious and extensively useful man so long as he lived. Though all the temporal and spiritual blessings of Abraham do not come upon his spiritual children; yet those who walk in the steps of their father Abraham, have ground to expect similar tokens of the divine favor. Similar causes produce similar effects. There is a natural and constituted connection between the piety of parents and the piety of their families; and there is a natural and constituted connection between the piety of families, and their temporal and spiritual peace, harmony,

and prosperity. Let parents, at this day, employ the same means that Abraham did, to promote the peace, harmony, and prosperity of his family, and they may hope to receive similar expressions of the divine love and approbation. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Though God may sometimes frown upon those who properly exercise parental authority, and upon those who enjoy the benefit of it, yet all things may eventually work together for their good. So that it still remains a general truth, that the proper exercise of parental authority, is infinitely important, as it tends to draw down the richest temporal and spiritual blessings on individual persons, private families, larger communities, and whole nations and kingdoms. The faithful exercise of parental authority stands connected with the best blessings that God can bestow, and men can receive in this world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be so important as has been said, that parents should properly exercise parental authority over their children and households; then it is highly important, that they themselves should be pious. It is really important, that children and youth should be pious, in order to escape the evils and dangers to which they are exposed in their early and inexperienced age, and in order to glorify God, and enjoy the hopes and consolations of the gospel. But it is much more important, that those, who have come upon the stage of life, and are placed at the head of a family, should exercise

that love to God, which is the fulfilling of the law, and prepares them for the discharge of every important duty devolved upon them. They cannot walk within their house with propriety, nor properly perform their duty to those, who are under their care, instruction, and government, before they cordially and unreservedly give up themselves to God, and resolve to live to him, and not to themselves. Nothing short of vital piety, can enable and dispose parents to discharge the great and self-denying duties which they owe to their children and households. They must first give themselves to the Lord, before they can give their children and households to him. They must first walk in the ways of the Lord, before they can consistently and sincerely command their children and households to walk in his ways, and avoid every evil and false way. Young people have reason to tremble at the prospect of entering into a family state, before they are prepared to fulfil the weighty duties, which will result from it. Parents are solemnly responsible to God for their conduct towards their children and households, whose temporal and spiritual interests are, for a while, suspended upon their treatment of them. If they faithfully perform their parental duties, they may be the means of promoting their temporal and eternal good; but if they are negligent and unfaithful, they may be the means of their temporal and eternal wretchedness.--- Those children and households are in a deplorable condition, whose parents, or masters, or mistresses, are destitute of vital piety, and totally neglect to watch over, instruct, restrain, and govern those, whom God has committed to their trust. But are not such unhappy parents and children every where to be seen? It

deeply concerns impenitent, unbelieving, and unfaithful parents to reflect upon their own guilty character and wretched condition, and upon the unhappy and dangerous state of their children and households, who may perish through their neglect, and whose blood, in that case, will be required at their hands. It is painful to think over the rising and numerous families here, who have no pious parents, or parent, to devote them to God, to instruct them in duty, or to restrain them from walking with the wicked in the broad and smooth path to destruction ; nor to carry them to the throne of divine grace. Can you endure the thought of teaching your children to treat you with ingratitude, and disrespect in this world, and with bitter reproach, in another world ? If not, reform yourselves, that you may reform your children and households, and that you both may escape the wrath to come.

2. If it be so important that parents should duly exercise their parental authority over their children and households as has been said ; then they are entirely inexcusable and guilty, if they neglect to do it. There is no duty, perhaps, among those, who call themselves christians, and among those who are real christians, so much neglected as the duty of commanding their children and households to keep the way of the Lord.--- Parents are generally disposed to give their children, and households a common education, and often to give some of them a liberal education, but there are only a very few, if any, that are sufficiently disposed to give them a good religious education. In this respect, parents are extremely apt to be too negligent and unfaithful. You may find a great many parents, who spare no time, nor expense to adorn the bodies of their chil-

dren, to cultivate their understanding, to polish their manners, and to provide a rich inheritance for them, while they greatly neglect to instruct them in duty, to restrain them from vanity, folly, and vice, and to impress their minds with a deep sense of their moral and indispensable obligations to remember their creator and obey his commands in the days of their youth. But these very parents will not presume to deny, that it is their first and most important duty, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.--- Why then do they neglect this plain, important, and acknowledged duty? Is there not a cause? And is not this the cause of their guilty negligence? They wish to be excused from the discharge of such a painful and self-denying duty. This leads them to devise a great many ways to palliate, extenuate, or entirely to excuse their neglect. But can they find any excuse, which will meet the approbation of God, or the approbation of their own conscience? Let us examine some of the excuses, which they often make.

They sometimes plead, that they are not capable of giving them religious instruction. But do they not view themselves capable of giving them other instructions? Do they not actually exercise their knowledge, their right, and authority to direct and command them in respect to their secular concerns? Why then are they not capable of teaching them to obey God, as well as to obey themselves, to do their duty on the sabbath, as well as on any other day of the week, to take care of their souls as well as to take care of their bodies, to prepare for dying as well as to prepare for living? Their own conscience will not excuse them

for not teaching their children all that they do know about the doctrines and duties of religion.

Some plead, that they cannot find time to give their children and household religious instruction. But do they not find time to do what they most desire to do, or what they believe to be of the most importance to do? Abraham found time to command his children and numerous household to keep the way of the Lord. Hannah found time to give religious instruction to her son Samuel. The mother and grand-mother of Timothy found time to give him religious instruction. And there are still here and there pious parents, who find time to pour religious instruction into the young and tender minds of their children. It is absurd, therefore, for any to plead the want of time, as an excuse for not giving their children line upon line, and precept upon precept, in respect to the duties of virtue and piety.

Some think it is not wise and prudent to exercise their parental authority, to make their children and households do what they are very loth to do, or to restrain them from doing what they ardently desire to do. They are afraid of constraining and restraining their children and household too much. They think it will not do to command them to read the bible, or to attend family prayers, or to attend catechisings, or to attend public worship. Nor on the other hand, will it do to restrain them absolutely from visiting on the sabbath from house to house, nor from attending balls, playing cards, and joining in other supposed innocent diversions and amusements. But why should parents have any authority over their families, if they may not exercise it in controlling their conduct? God who has

given them their authority, requires them to exercise it, and they feel no hesitation to command, forbid, and restrain authoritatively, in regard to every thing but religion, which is infinitely more important to themselves and to their children, than any thing and every thing else. This excuse will be of no avail in the sight of God, nor sooner or later in the view of their own conscience.

But they often make another, and they imagine a more plausible excuse for their neglect. They plead that others, and such as they view wiser and better than themselves, do not exercise their parental authority, with respect to the moral and religious conduct of their children and households, and therefore, they cannot command and control them in respect to such things as are highly esteemed among men, though they know they are an abomination in the sight of God.—And if they could control them in such things, it would be an injury to them, to be more strict and rigid than other parents. It would spoil their characters, and totally prevent their appearing with reputation and making their way in the world, which is too great self-denial for them to exercise, and for their children to endure. There would be great weight in this excuse, if they and their children were designed to live only for time, and not for eternity. Let them, therefore, only view themselves in the light of eternity, and this excuse will entirely vanish. In a word, it is vain, and worse than vain, to devise and cherish any excuse for disobeying God, and betraying the eternal interests of those committed to their watch, and care and government.

3. If the proper exercise of parental authority be so important as has been said, in order to promote and

perpetuate religion ; then we may discover the primary cause of the declension of religion in any place where it has prevailed and flourished. It must be primarily and principally owing to the neglect of parents in exercising their parental authority over their children and households. While parents faithfully follow the example of faithful Abraham, they seldom fail of promoting and preserving religion in their own families. And family religion generally spreads from one family to another in a continued, a long, if not perpetual line of succession. It was owing, as we have seen, to pious, private, parental education, that the spirit and cause of true religion were transmitted, from family to family, through the long period from Abraham to Christ. And it has been transmitted, through the same channel, from Christ to this day. It is evident, therefore, that when this cause becomes languid, in one place or another, religion will, in the same degree, languish and decline. The declension of religion most generally begins in families. Is not this confirmed by universal observation ? Look into any place, where family government is neglected, and will you not find that religion is declining and languishing in that place ? Look into this place in particular. Many of you can recollect the piety and faithfulness of your fathers, in instructing, warning, admonishing, and restraining you, and the order and regularity which were the happy effects which followed. Do you now discover the same things in your own, or other families ? Can you doubt the cause ? Has not family government declined, and religion declined with it ? Do the third or fourth generation maintain that family government, which the first maintained ? Do you discover much

religion among the children, or youth, or the young and rising families? Can you not easily trace this melancholy effect to the neglect or decline of the faithful exercise of parental authority? The decline of religion never fails to follow the decline of family government. Irreligious families are the nurseries of impiety and irreligion. When parents cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God and their children and households, it is to be expected, that they will grow up ignorant, stupid, impenitent and irreligious. Parents of this character are fast multiplying here; and do we not here see the melancholy fruits and and effects of their great and inexcusable negligence?

4. If the proper exercise of parental authority be so important, as has been said, to promote and perpetuate religion; then we may discover the primary cause of the prevalence of religious errors at this day in this land. A few years ago, either infidelity, or gross and fatal errors were scarcely any where to be found.--- The great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel were generally taught, believed, and professed. But of late, a host of sectarians, and a flood of fatal errors have spread almost every where. These dire effects are, undoubtedly, primarily and principally owing to the neglect of parents in not giving their children and households, that religious instruction, which was given to them, and which they ought to have given to those under their watch and care. The general practice of parents and others of teaching children and youth the Assembly's Catechism continued, for many years, almost a complete barrier against the spread of dangerous and fatal errors in respect to the essential doctrines and duties of christianity. But since this excellent system of di-

vine truths has been so much laid aside in families and schools, a torrent of fatal errors has come in, and threatens to bear down all before it. How many parents are there, who not only neglect to teach their children and households the Catechism, but object against its being taught, and the bible's being read in the school? Is it strange then, that truth is fallen in our streets, and that error so triumphantly prevails almost every where? Mankind naturally love error and hate religious truth. This was strikingly verified in the days of Jeroboam, who led away ten tribes out of twelve, to forsake the house and worship of the true God, to bow down and worship dumb idols. As soon as God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, he gave up all nations to idolatry; for there was not a man left to restrain them from their beloved error. And the only way, by which any were preserved from falling into the same error, was by the faith and faithfulness of Abraham.--- And if any thing, by the way of external means can suppress and restrain the progress of error, it must be the faithful exercise of parental authority, example, and instruction. This will strike at the fountain-head of the numerous streams of error, which threaten to overwhelm the land.

5. We learn from this subject, to whom it primarily and principally belongs to bring about a reformation in piety and virtue. It certainly belongs to parents in particular. And is there a pious, or sober parent, who will not acknowledge, that a reformation is necessary? There is no occasion to look into the state of particular families, in order to see that parental authority is not generally and duly exercised. We learn the neglect of performing that great duty, by the visible effects of the neglect in the rising generation and rising fami-

lies. Is there any fashionable and sinful amusement, error, or vice, which children and youth and rising families are not running into? And should there not be a reformation? But to whom can we look to bring it about? Is it reasonable to look to the young, who are joyfully swimming down the current of corruption? Can it be expected, that they will reform themselves? It cannot. Must we not then look to the aged and the heads of families to reform the young, the unsuspicious and unguarded? The cause of virtue and religion is now lodged in the hands of the pious and virtuous few, to defend, promote, and perpetuate the infinitely important interests of vital piety, and christian morality. If you now ask, what must we do? The answer is easy. Be faithful to yourselves, and to your children and households. I might venture to say, do as your fathers did to you. You do not want for numbers, for information, nor for influence. The wicked always did and always must bow before the good. You have most of you vowed to the Lord, with respect to your children and households and you may not go back.--- What if it be painful and self-denying to do your duty, have you not solemnly engaged to do it? Did you expect, when you engaged to live a christian life, that you could live such a life, without self-denial? And what have you to lose, in comparison with what you have to gain for yourselves and households? You may lose the love and applause of some, but not the good opinion of any. All men have consciences, which approve of right conduct in themselves and others.--- Let every one then this day make and keep the same good resolution, that Joshua made, "as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

SERMON V.

THE REASON ANNEXED TO THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS. XX. 5, 6.---*For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

This is the reason annexed to the second commandment, which runs in this form: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." The phrase, visiting iniquity, is often used in scripture, and always means punishing iniquity. God here threatens to punish disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents; and on the other hand, he promises to bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents. This reason annexed to the second commandment is probably much oftener read and repeated, than understood. It was designed to make a deep impression upon the minds of both parents and children. But it is

not to be expected, that it will make a deep impression upon the minds of any, who do not understand the meaning, the force, and propriety of it. I shall endeavor, therefore, in the present discourse, to explain it as clearly and intelligibly as I can. And in order to this, it seems necessary to show,

I. That God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents ;

II. That God does punish disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents ; And,

III. That there is a consistency in this mode of conduct.

I. I am to show, that God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents.

God promised Abraham, that he would show mercy to his obedient children, for the sake of his obedience. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect---and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Abraham was faithful, in the first instance, to keep covenant with God in respect to his family. God says "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." After he had offered up his son Isaac on the altar, the Lord said again to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice." For the sake of Abram's obedience, God did actually

bless thousands and thousands of his obedient children from generation to generation. God blessed the obedient children of David for his sake. After he had proposed to build the temple, and God had forbidden him to do it, he then promised to bless him, by blessing his children. He said to him, "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt rest with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish thy kingdom. He shall build me an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." But though Solomon was not uniformly obedient like his father David, and for a time fell into idolatry, yet God told him he would not punish him so severely as he deserved for his father David's sake. "Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant, and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Nevertheless, in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake." Though Abijam's heart "was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of his father David; nevertheless, for David's sake, did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him." Again, it is said, though Jehoram the son of Jehosaphat greatly deviated from the path of duty, "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children." God blessed the obedient children of Jonadab for the sake of the

obedience of their father Jonadab. It is said of the merciful man, "his seed is blessed;" and of the just man, "his children are blessed after him." Thus it appears from scripture, that God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, not only unto the third and fourth generation, but unto every generation of obedient parents and children.

II. I proceed to show, that God does punish disobedient children for the sake of disobedient parents.

This is expressly asserted in the text. God solemnly declares, that he does visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. This declaration means that God does punish children, who hate him, for the sake of their fathers before them, who hated him; which is precisely the same thing, as his punishing disobedient children, for the sake of their disobedient parents. As it is only obedient children, that God blesses, for the sake of obedient parents; so it is only disobedient children, that God punishes for the sake of disobedient parents. This will appear from a number of plain, undeniable facts recorded in scripture, as well as from some plain, scripture declarations. God visited the iniquity of Ham not upon himself, but upon his son Canaan and his posterity, for the long period of more than four thousand years. God punished the posterity of Baasha for the sake of their father's iniquity. "Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying, Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; behold, I will

take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." God also visited the iniquity of Ahab not upon himself, but upon his son. "The word of the Lord came to Elijah, the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." These facts are perfectly agreeable to the divine declarations on this subject. Job says, "He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail." Again, speaking of the wicked man, he says, "God layeth up his iniquity for his children; he rewardeth him, and he shall know it." David, speaking of one of the same character, says, "Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following, let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out." Christ taught the same doctrine that the prophets taught, concerning God's punishing a disobedient posterity for the sake of their disobedient progenitors. "Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Here Christ foretells the cruelty and persecution, which that genera-

tion should be guilty of, and then tells them, that they should be severely and signally punished for the sake of their cruel and persecuting forefathers. The meaning is, that because God delayed to punish their fathers according to their desert, he would more certainly and severely punish them according to their desert. Having proved from scripture, that God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, and does punish disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents, it remains to show,

III. The consistency of this mode of the divine conduct towards obedient and disobedient parents and children. It must be granted, that this is a subject rather difficult to understand and explain; but if it be consistent, its consistency may be explained and understood. And in order to make it appear consistent and plain, I would observe,

1. That it does not imply, that God punishes innocent parents for the sins of their guilty children; nor that he punishes innocent children for the sins of their guilty parents. This would be wrong in its own nature, and contrary to an express command, which he had given to his people Israel. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." When God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children he does not punish the innocent instead of the guilty, which would be contrary to immutable justice and to the plain prohibition of his own law. He says "he visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." He threatens to visit the iniquity of the fathers, not upon

their innocent children, but upon their children who hate him, and who deserve to be punished for their hating him. Sinful children deserve to be punished for their own sins, and God punishes them for their own sins, and the reason he gives for it, is the iniquity of their fathers. Their fathers deserve to be punished for their own iniquity, but God, as the moral governour of the world, sees fit, in some cases, to pass over the iniquity of fathers, and to punish their children for their own iniquity. When both parents and children are sinful, God may punish both, or he may punish the parents and not the children, or the children and not the parents. And this is what he threatens in the reason annexed to the second commandment. He will visit the iniquity of the fathers, not upon themselves, but upon their children, who hate him. This is not punishing innocent children instead of their guilty parents; but only punishing guilty children for their own sins, instead of punishing guilty parents for their own sins. This is neither an act of justice, nor injustice, but only an act of sovereignty. God has a right to act as a sovereign in either punishing, or not punishing mankind for their sins in this world. He may suffer some ungodly parents to prosper all their days in their iniquity; but not suffer their ungodly children to prosper all their days in their iniquity. He may deny prosperity to some godly parents all their days; but bless their godly children with signal prosperity. This is a state of probation, and not of retribution. Though God never punishes any in this world, who do not deserve to be punished, nor bless any in this world, who do not deserve the tokens of his approbation; yet he does not bestow signal favors upon all, who are worthy

of the tokens of his peculiar favor, nor punish all who deserve the peculiar tokens of his displeasure. He is not obliged to punish, or reward any of mankind according to their deserts in this world. He delayed, for many years, to punish Amorites, because their iniquity was not full. He delayed to punish the iniquity of the Egyptians, for many years, because their iniquity was not full, until they disregarded the severe judgments sent upon them by the hand of Moses. He delayed to punish the iniquity of his own peculiar people, until they had filled up the measure of their guilt, by crucifying his dearly beloved Son, and then he sunk their city and their nation in universal ruin. And thus he delays to punish wicked parents, until their more wicked children have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and then he punishes them according to their own desert. This God tells us, in the reason annexed to his second commandment, is the mode of his moral government in this world; and where is the injustice or inconsistency of it? He does not punish any innocent persons, nor any guilty persons for any sins but their own. But the truth is, mankind have always been disposed to misunderstand, and to misrepresent the conduct of God, in blessing obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, and in punishing disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents; which has led them to complain of the wise and holy dispensations of divine providence. Let us now, therefore, hear what God has to say, upon this subject, to explain and justify the rectitude and consistency of his own conduct. If we turn to the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, we shall find God fairly discussing and settling this important controversy with his peo-

ple. Though they had often read the reason annexed to the second commandment, yet they were disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent it. God was now treating them according to his declaration in the second commandment; for he was visiting the iniquities of their fathers upon them, by causing them to pine away in their own iniquities under his chastising hand. Had it not been for the iniquities of their fathers for a long series of years, he would not have punished them by a seventy years captivity in Babylon for their own sins. But they insinuated, that God was punishing them for their fathers' sins, and not for their own, which they complained of as unequal and inconsistent. God allows that it would be unjust to punish them for their fathers' sins, instead of their own, but at the same time denies, that he had ever done so, or ever would do so. God demands, "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die." This God says is right, and proceeds to illustrate it, by several examples. "If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right---he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." This is the case of a father, he next puts the case of a son. "If this just man beget a son, that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and doeth the like to any one of these things---he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him." He proceeds to put another case. "Now lo, if he (this wicked son) beget a son that seeth all his father's sins,

which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live?" Having prepared the way for it, God now meets and refutes their great objection against his conduct. "Yet ye say, Why? doth not the son in fact bear the iniquity of the father? "Are you not now visiting the iniquity of our fathers upon us their children, and actually punishing us for our father's sins, and not for our own? This God absolutely denies. "When the son hath done that, which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon *him*, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon *him*." God illustrates this truth, by different cases, and declares, that if a righteous man should turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, he should die in his iniquity; or if a wicked man should turn from his wickedness and become righteous, he should live. Still God supposes, that the objectors are not satisfied. "Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?" After making this appeal to their own consciences, he assures them that he would in time to come, as he had done in time past, reward, or punish them according to their own personal conduct. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." God here completely refutes the objec-

tion, which his people made against the rectitude and consistency of his conduct towards them, by showing that he never had and never would punish parents for the sins of their children, nor children for the sins of their parents, as they had supposed and represented. But he does not pretend to say, that he had not visited the iniquity of their fathers upon them, according to the reason he had annexed to his second commandment. For he had actually done it. The long series of their fathers' iniquities was the occasion of his sending them into their long captivity in Babylon. He delayed to punish the nation according to their deserts for a long course of years, until they were ripe for a dreadful national calamity, and then he inflicted that national calamity upon their children, who deserved it for their own sins. The iniquity of their fathers was the occasion, not the cause of their being punished; just as the sins of those, who killed the prophets, were the occasion, and not the cause of the blood of all the prophets being required of that generation, who crucified the Lord of glory. God having delayed to punish persecutors, it was then time to punish persecutors according to their deserts. When God blesses obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, he rewards the children for following the good example of their parents; and when he punishes disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parent, he punishes them for their own sin in following the wicked example of their parents. In the first case, he does not reward parents for their own obedience; but rewards children for their own obedience; which is agreeable to the reason annexed to the fifth commandment. "Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land, which the

Lord thy God giveth thee." The reason annexed is, a promise of long life and prosperity. This is exactly similar to the promise annexed to the second commandment—"showing mercy unto thousands that love me, and keep my commandments." God was under no obligation to make these promises to obedient children; nor to threaten to punish disobedient children in this life. But he had a right to make both the promise and threatening, as a holy and righteous sovereign, to answer wise and important purposes. And he has a right to treat obedient children according to his promise, and disobedient children according to his threatening. This is perfectly agreeable to his justice and goodness, and not in the least inconsistent with the law of nature, or his own written law, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children; neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since God has promised to bless the obedient children of obedient parents, and threatened to punish the disobedient children of disobedient parents, we may be assured, that he will faithfully fulfil the promise and the threatening according to their true import and extent.

It appears from scripture and universal observation, that obedient parents sometimes have disobedient, as well as obedient children; and that disobedient parents sometimes have obedient, as well as disobedient children; and that neither obedient children are always blessed, nor disobedient children are always punished. Though Abraham was an obedient parent, and

commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord; yet it is probable that he had disobedient, as well as obedient children. Isaac was an obedient son, but it does not appear that all his other sons were so. David had both obedient and disobedient children, and this was true of other pious kings. And on the other hand, Ahaz was one of the worst of parents, and of Kings; but yet his son Hezekiah was a most excellent person and prince. Nor does it appear, that the good children of good parents have always been blessed, nor that the bad children of bad parents have always been punished. Now, these things seem to be inconsistent with the promise and threatening in the text. It seems as though God does not fulfil either his promise or his threatening, in respect to obedient and disobedient children. But this, however, must not be admitted. There must be some way to remove the difficulty. And it will immediately vanish if we only consider that both the promise and threatening are *general* and *indefinite*. God does not promise any particular parent, that he shall have obedient children; or if his children are obedient, that he will bless each of them in particular; or if he blesses each of them, that he will bestow the same blessings upon each.--- And on the other hand, he does not threaten any particular parent, that he shall have disobedient children; or if he have disobedient children, that he will punish them all; or if he punishes any, that he will punish them all alike. Nor does God specify in his promise and threatening, when he will bless obedient, and punish disobedient children. He has reserved all these particulars in his own power, retaining his right to act as an absolute Sovereign. Both his promise and threat-

ening are to be construed and understood, in a general and indefinite sense, like many other general and indefinite promises and threatenings we find in his word.--- We read, "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread." We read "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." We read, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." We read, "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner." These we know are general and indefinite promises and threatenings, which God acts as a sovereign in fulfilling. He fulfils them at one time, and not at another; and in respect to some persons, and not in respect to others. Just so, the promise and threatening in the text are general and indefinite; and God acts as a sovereign in fulfilling them. I know some have considered them as particular and definite, and adduced them as proof of the opinion, that if parents are faithful in dedicating and educating their children, they shall certainly be pious. But this appears to be a groundless opinion from universal observation. It is generally true, that pious parents oftener have pious children, than wicked parents do, and wicked parents more rarely have pious children, than pious parents. But both pious and wicked parents sometimes have wicked children. God has not promised any particular spiritual or temporal blessings to pious parents, or pious children; nor threatened any particular spiritual or temporal evils to wicked parents, or wicked children. We have a right to conclude, that God always fulfils the promise and the threatening in the text, according to their general and indefinite meaning; and not to conclude, that he fulfils them in any other sense. And

in this sense, we find by observation and experience, that he often does visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, that hate him, from generation to generation; and that he does shew mercy to thousands of children, who love him, and keep his commandments. And he thus blesses obedient children for the sake of their pious parents, and punishes disobedient children for the sake of their wicked parents.

2. It appears from what has been said upon this subject, that God is highly pleased with pious parents, who faithfully discharge their duty towards their children. He generally and indefinitely promises to show mercy to their children, for their sake, so far as is consistent with his perfect wisdom and goodness in governing the world; which is a peculiar mark of his approbation of their fidelity. He knows how near and dear their children are to them, and what pure and high satisfaction they take in the piety and prosperity of their offspring. They view any good bestowed upon them, as bestowed upon themselves. They have no greater joy, than to see their children both pious and prosperous, walking in the truth. It was a great satisfaction to Abraham, to see Isaac his son, made pious and prosperous, for the sake of his parental fidelity. It was a great satisfaction to David, that God gave his son Solomon a wise and understanding heart, and crowned him with power, riches, and glory for his sake. When one man bestows favour upon another for the sake of a third person, it is a peculiar and delicate expression of his love and respect of that person, for whose sake he bestows the favours. It was a strong and delicate expression of David's love and friendship to Jonathan, when he showed kindness to Mephibo-

sheth, for Jonathan his father's sake. So God's showing kindness to the children of pious parents, for their parental faithfulness, is a peculiar and high expression of his approbation of their conduct in training them up in the way they should go ; especially, if God bestow great spiritual, as well as temporal favours upon them. There is great reason to think, that according to his general and indefinite promise, he often does bestow the greatest and richest blessings upon children, for their pious parents's sake. In a great many instances, he undoubtedly grants their children the renewing and sanctifying influences of his holy spirit, and prepares them for great prosperity and usefulness in the world. There are a vast many ways, in which God can show favour to children,for their parents's sake, and by which he manifests his peculiar approbation of parental faithfulness.

3. It appears from what has been said, that God is highly displeased with those parents, who are unfaithful in doing their duty to their children. He generally and indefinitely threatens to punish their disobedient children unto the third and fourth generation, which is as long as parents ever live to see their children, and the evils they suffer in this life. His threatening to unfaithful parents seems to be more definite, than his promise to faithful parents. He threatens to visit the iniquity of unfaithful parents upon their children who hate him, unto the third and fourth generation ; which seemed to imply, that their children shall hate him unto the third and fourth generation. That is, he will bring spiritual, as well as natural evils upon them for so long a period. He will withhold from them his special grace, as well as his special temporal

blessings. Unholy parents have as strong natural affection for their children, as pious parents have for theirs. It gives them peculiar pain and anxiety to see their children pursuing such evil courses, as lead to poverty and reproach in this world, and to eternal misery in the next. The sufferings of their children are often as affecting to them, as their own sufferings, and sometimes much harder to bear. This all men know; and upon this ground, the enemies of parents often revenge upon them, by punishing their children. The king of Babylon "slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes." This he did to torture the feelings of their father. God says, he will punish the children of unfaithful parents before their eyes, to strike daggers in their hearts, for their unfaithfulness. God still visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. He suffers them to walk in the way of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes, and to prepare themselves for both temporal and eternal ruin; which wrings the hearts of unfaithful parents with the keenest sorrow and self-reproach.

4. God appears infinitely wise in treating children according to the mode he has established in the second commandment. To bless children for their father's sake, and to punish them for their father's sake, is directly suited to touch parents in their tenderest part. When God addresses their understandings, or consciences, they are extremely apt to disregard his voice; but when he speaks to their hearts, they can hardly help feeling what he says. When he tells them how kindly and mercifully he will treat their childern, if they will only conduct towards them as they ought to conduct towards them, it is calculated to awaken all their

tender feelings towards the objects that lie nearest to their hearts. And he has plainly told them how they ought to conduct towards them. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command you this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This is as much as to say to parents, "only give your children this religious instruction from supreme love to me, and I will shew them mercy, and grant them every temporal and spiritual good, which infinite wisdom and goodness shall see fit to bestow. And can you desire, that I should treat them in a better manner? I lodge the holiness and happiness of your children in your own hands and hearts. It depends upon your fidelity, whether you shall see your children holy and happy in this world and the next." Can parents reasonably desire any greater encouragement than this, to give up their children to God, to give them a religious education, to set before them an amiable example of piety, and to carry them to God, and pray, "O that our children may live before thee." On the other hand, what could God say more directly suited to prevent parents from being unfaithful to their children, than to tell them, that if they are unfaithful, he will visit their iniquity of unfaithfulness upon their children and childrens' children unto the third and fourth generation? How can they bear to see the fatal consequences of their unfaithfulness in the sin and misery of their children? If any motives can deter pa-

rents from neglecting their duty towards their children, it seems that the motive, which God sets before them in the second commandment, must have this happy effect. In a word, we cannot conceive, that God could have established a wiser, or better made of conduct, than his blessing and punishing children for their father's sake. It is suited to promote virtue and restrain vice in both parents and children, from generation to generation, to the end of time.

5. It appears from what has been said, that children have great reason to be thankful for pious and faithful parents. All children have derived, or might have derived great spiritual and temporal benefit from the faithfulness of their parents; and all pious children are thankful to God for parental faithfulness. They are thankful, that they were given up to God in sincerity, that they were instructed, advised, admonished, and restrained by their pious parents. They are thankful for their example and prayers, and for all that they have done to draw down divine blessings upon them in time and eternity. Moses was thankful, that God was not only his God, but his father's God. "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." But whether children are gracious, or graceless, obedient or disobedient, they ought to be thankful for the fidelity of their pious parents. Their ingratitude and disobedience, under faithful parental instruction, are extremely sinful and displeasing to God. They abuse one of the most rare and distinguishing privileges. But few children enjoy such precious privileges, because there are but few faithful parents. It is one of the most

ominous marks of deep depravity, in children and youth, to despise and abuse pious, parental instruction, and is generally followed, by a very vicious and abandoned life. Those, who break over a pious and religious education, general break over all other restraints, and become prodigies in wickedness. But were children and youth ever more disposed to despise and abuse pious parental instruction, than at this day? Where is pious, parental instruction and faithfulness more despised and abused, than in this place? Is there scarcely a pious child or youth to be found, even in religious families, or any in irreligious families? What is to be expected, if God does not visit the iniquity of fathers upon themselves? Will he not visit their iniquities upon their children, unto the third and fourth generation?

6. From this subject, we learn the solemn importance of parents being religious. They are expressly required to bring up their children in the nuture and admonition of the Lord. They are bound by the supreme authority of their creator and law-giver to give their children a pious and religious education. But are graceless parents prepared to give their children such an education? While they neglect to give up themselves to God, will they not neglect to give up their children to God? While they neglect to give their supreme affection to God, will they not neglect to teach their children to remember and love their creator supremely? While they neglect to obey God's commands, will they not neglect to command their children and households to keep the way of the Lord and obey his commands? While they neglect to pray for themselves, will they not neglect to pray for their children? Just so long as parents remain destitute of

grace, they will remain morally incapable of giving their children a pious and religious education, and suffer them to walk in the way of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes in the broad path to endless ruin.--- The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. The indulgence of unholy parents to their children is extremely cruel, for it exposes them to sin and misery in this world and in the world to come. And can it afford them consolation to expect, that God will spare them, and visit their iniquities upon their children, whom they love as their own souls? Can they bear to see their children sinking in sin and wretchedness? But how can they prevent these dire evils? God tells them how. He requires them to love him with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their strength, and to teach their children to keep his commands, and he will shew mercy to thousands of such dutiful and obedient children. To how many parents does this subject apply? How many are there, that have not given their hearts, their names, their children, and their lives to God? How ungrateful are they treating God? How unkindly are they treating their children? And how unwisely are they treating themselves? Will not God visit them for their negligence? Or if he does not visit them, will he not visit their children, and their children's children?

Finally, uninstructed, unadvised, undedicated, and unrestrained children and youth are to be pitied. They know not what they do, while they pursue vanity, and indulge the corruptions of their hearts? They are ring-leaders in every sinful and soul-destroying practice. If they are condemned and reproved, they have able defenders, their unfaithful parents. They are

out of the reach of all, who wish and endeavor to instruct and reform them. But if they are to be pitied, how justly are those children and youth to be condemned, who follow their example, instead of following the instructions and admonitions and examples of their pious parents !

SERMON VI.

A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

ISAIAH XLIV. 5---*One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

This chapter begins with a prediction of the future prosperity and increase of the church of God. "Now hear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring---And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Here is a representation of a large and copious effusion of the divine Spirit upon persons of all ages, but more especially upon the young, who resemble the flowers, that adorn the face of the earth. And it is plainly intimated that this divine influence should produce one and the same happy effect upon the hearts and conduct of all, who should be the subjects of it. It should

dispose them to make a public profession of religion, and bind themselves to be the Lord's forever. And since the same cause will naturally produce the same effect, we may justly conclude,

That those, who become the subjects of special grace, will choose to join the church, and enter into covenant to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. I shall,

I. Describe the subjects of special grace;

II. Show what is implied in their professing religion, or entering into covenant with God; And,

III. Show why they will choose to join the church and enter into covenant with God.

I. I am to describe the subjects of special grace.—We often speak of the common and special influence of the divine Spirit. The most thoughtless, stupid, unawakened sinners are the subjects of the common influence of the divine Spirit. It was by his common influence, that he strove with the old world before they were overthrown and destroyed. It was by his common influence, that he strove with the sinners in Zion in the days of their deep declension. And it is by his his common influence, that he now strives with sinners in general. There are scarcely any sinners, but what are, more or less, the subjects of the common influence of the Spirit. He often restrains, reproves, and condemns them, by various means on various occasions. Almost every sabbath, and even every day, he awakens some momentary fear or conviction in their minds. But these common momentary alarms make no abiding impressions on their minds, because they are able to resist such weak and momentary strivings of the spirit. And though he sometimes strives more

powerfully and constantly; yet so long as he does not produce any radical or essential change in the nature of their moral exercises, they continue to resist and stifle convictions, and maintain there enmity, opposition, and selfishness. The common influence of the Spirit never produces the least degree of grace in the heart. This has always appeared, when God has poured the largest effusions of the Spirit. Multitudes were awakened under John the Baptist's preaching, under Christ's preaching, and under the apostles' preaching, who never repented, and embraced and professed the gospel. They were the subjects of only the common influence of the Spirit, which produced no saving change in their hearts. But when God operates by his special influence, he not only awakens and convinces sinners, but slays the enmity of their hearts, by producing new and holy exercises, and turning them from selfishness to pure, disinterested love to God. The subjects of his special grace become new creatures. Their stony heart is taken away, and a new heart is given them. They become new creatures. Old things pass away and all things become new. They love God, whom they hated; and hate sin, which they loved. They renounce the things of the world, the men of the world, and the spirit of the world. They experience the fruits of the Spirit; which are love, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, meekness, and every holy and virtuous affection. Such are the characters of true converts, or the subjects of special, saving grace. I now proceed to show,

II. What is implied in their professing religion, or entering into covenant to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. They are repre-

sented in the text, as making a public profession of religion, and ratifying their profession by subscribing a covenant or some solemn obligation to fulfil their engagements to the Lord. The public profession of religion under the Mosaic dispensation was a covenant transaction, in which God and his people mutually stipulated to perform certain conditions. The people stipulated to love God with all the heart, and to obey all his commands. They avouch him to be their God, or solemnly declared themselves to be the Lord's, and he avouched them to be his people, and engaged to be their God. This mutual stipulation was considered and called an oath. The people are represented as swearing unto the Lord; and he as confirming the immutability of his promise by an oath, which it was impossible for him to violate. Though covenanting with God, at this day, is not attended with the same circumstances, that attended covenanting with God under the law; yet it is essentially the same, and creates a bond or obligation equally and mutually binding. Those who now make a public profession of religion, consecrate themselves and all that they have to God, and solemnly engage to take his word as the standard of their faith and practice; and at the same time, call themselves christians, and virtually, if not literally, subscribe with their own hands, to walk in universal obedience to the divine laws and ordinances. It is said, that the primitive christians gave themselves to the Lord, and professed a good profession before many witnesses. They professed godliness, which was a good profession and contained every thing implied in vital piety. In this public and solemn transaction, they appealed to God and man to

witness the truth and sincerity of their profession, which was tantamount to a solemn oath. Such is the proper nature and solemnity of making a public profession of religion and entering into covenant with God at this day. It now remains to show,

III. Why the subjects of special grace choose to join the church and enter into covenant with God.--- The prophet represents young converts as spontaneously choosing to make a public profession of religion, and to bind themselves to be the Lord's. They choose to make it known, that they belong to the people of God, and to put themselves under the bond of the covenant to walk in the way of his commandments. This has been generally found by observation and experience to be the happy fruit and effect of a saving change or sound conversion. The question now before us, is, Why do such young converts spontaneously desire and choose to join the church and lay themselves under covenant vows and obligations to live in universal and persevering obedience to the whole will of God? There is a variety of weighty and powerful reasons for their freely and voluntarily binding themselves to be the Lord's. In particular,

1. They love the commands of God. A change of heart always produces love to the law of God, or it rather consists in love to the divine law, which is a condition of the covenant of grace. So the apostle says in the eighth of Hebrews. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Paul said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward

man." And David said, "O how love I thy law." As soon as the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, it never fails to produce love to his law. And those, who love his law, choose to obey it and to bind themselves to obey it forever. This was exemplified in the views and conduct of the converts, that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping, they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." The subjects of special grace have had their enmity to the divine law slain; and of course, love that law, which they hated and choose to love and obey it forever; which is one good reason, why they choose to join themselves to the Lord and to his people.

2. They love the ordinances, as well as the law of God. They love religion, and all the instituted duties of it, which they once neglected and despised. They love to draw near to God, in secret and social prayer, and in his public worship in his house. And for the same reason, they desire to commemorate the death of their divine Redeemer according to his his dying command, "This do ye in remembrance of me." Though this be an appropriate duty of the subjects of grace, yet they have no right to attend upon this special ordinance, before they profess Christ before men and bind themselves to walk with his friends in obedience to his commands, by a solemn and perpetual covenant. The positive and instituted duties of religion are calculated and designed for the benefit of the cordial friends of Christ;

and as soon as any become his friends, they sincerely desire to name his name and join with his followers in celebrating his special ordinances. This was the case of those, who were converted on the day of Pentecost. We read, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The same desire to join with the people of God, and to partake of the holy sacrament, is a common effect which flows from the special effusions of the divine spirit. Young converts never fail to flock to Christ as doves to their windows. They spontaneously desire to join the church, and to bind themselves to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord.

3. The subjects of special grace choose to join the church, because their hearts are united to christians. Though they once despised and avoided christians, yet as soon as they possess the spirit of Christ, they feel a peculiar complacency towards his friends, and delight to unite with them in the duties of religion, and in their attendance on divine ordinances. Those, who were converted on the day of Pentecost, were of one heart and of one soul, and united and continued together in social worship, and the celebration of divine ordinances. The subjects of special grace possess a spirit of mutual brotherly love. They love as brethren, and discern a peculiar beauty and excellence in all, that love the Lord. This christian union and affection is not momentary, but permanent and universal. It extends to all, who appear to be the subjects of special grace. David loved, esteemed and delighted in the saints, as the excellent of the earth. The

apostle John says, "We know, that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."—Love to christians is commonly one of the first sensible effects of a saving change, and of the peculiar evidences of it, without which the same apostle says, no other evidence is to be relied on: "for he, that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" As all the subjects of special grace sincerely love the church composed of the subjects of grace; so they naturally desire to join the church, and maintain a spiritual union and communion with the church in all gospel ordinances.

4. Those, who possess the grace of God, in truth, desire to promote his cause and interest in the world. They ardently desire, that his cause may prevail, and his kingdom may grow and flourish and fill the earth. And they desire to be workers together with him in building up his kingdom; and for this reason, wish to put themselves in the best situation, and under the strongest obligations to promote the cause of truth, and the prosperity of Zion. David calls upon the friends of God, "to pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and declares with respect to himself, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Though young converts may do something to promote the cause of God, before they make a public profession of religion; yet by making a public profession of their faith and love, they can do much more to promote his cause, and lay themselves under stronger obligations to do it. Their professions gives them a greater freedom and creates a greater obligation to speak and act

for God, and the good of their fellow men. Besides, by joining the church they increase their number, strengthen their hands, cement their union, and augment their zeal and resolution to promote virtue and piety, and to suppress every thing that obstructs the salutary effects of divine truth and divine ordinances. Young converts have good ground to expect, that they shall derive these great advantages and opportunities of doing good, by joining the church ; and therefore they wish to name the name of Christ, that they may be better able to promote his cause and kingdom. They ought to be more concerned to do good, than to get good, by professing religion and binding themselves to promote it. But the great enemy of God and religion often tries all his artifice, to prevent them from uniting with its friends to do good, by exciting in their minds groundless fears, that they shall endanger the salvation of their own souls, if they attend the sacrament, where men may eat and drink damnation unto themselves. But supreme love to God and a zeal according to knowledge, will banish such fears, and sweetly constrain them to do their duty and leave the event with God.

5. Those, who are the subjects of special grace, desire to grow in grace ; and for that reason desire to join the church, that they may enjoy the best means of spiritual edification and growth in grace. They desire the sincere milk of the word and the nourishment of divine ordinances, that they may grow thereby. All divine ordinances are designed and calculated to promote the spiritual benefit and edification and comfort of the children of God. They have, therefore, always highly prized them and endeavored to enjoy them in the house of God. David says, " One thing

have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Again he says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those, that he planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." The subjects of special grace are commonly very desirous at first, and always afterwards, of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They esteem a day in the courts of the Lord better than a thousand, where divine truths are exhibited, and divine ordinances are administered, for their spiritual benefit and growth of grace. For the sake of enjoying such means of grace to the best advantage, those, who have become the subjects of special grace, desire to join the church and enjoy the special privileges of it. Besides,

6. They are so sensible of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, ond their proneness to forget and forsake God, they desire to bind themselves, by covenant vows and obligations, to be stedfast and unmovable in his service. They find their hearts are like a deceitful bow, always bent to backsliding. Their first joyful views and hopes are often soon sunk in clouds and darkness, and their ardent love to God, soon succeeded by an undue love to the world, and their warm attachment to the friends of God, interrupted and abated by mixing with his apparently amiable enemies. They feel, therefore, the need of binding themselves to God and to his friends, to check and restrain them from going backwards, instead of forward in their religious

course. These and various other reasons, that might be mentioned, concur to lead them to enter into a solemn and perpetual covenant with God, never to be forgotten. I shall conclude at present with one remark, which is plainly suggested by the subject. It is this: Those, who have sincerely made a public profession of religion, must rejoice to see any, who appear to be the subjects of special grace, make a public profession of religion. There was great joy in Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day. There was great joy in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And there was great joy in Samaria. And this great joy in all these instances was occasioned by those, who made a public and credible profession of religion. It is very desirable, that sinners should be turned from sin to holiness, and publicly declare they are the Lord's, and come and subscribe with their own hands a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. It is very desirable, that all in this place, who have become the subjects of special grace, should spontaneously confess Christ before men, and add their names, their talents, their influence, and exertions to this church. We have need of them, and they have need of us. The spirit and the bride say come; let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and partake of the rich provisions of Christ's table. Here a question arises, which every professor ought to put to himself. Do I desire the growth, the increase, and prosperity of this church? Do I desire that those, who are not, might be the subjects of special grace? This is a trying question; and let no member of the church refuse to try himself by it.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If those who have become the subjects of special grace, desire to make a public profession of religion, and to enter into covenant with God; then none, who have really become subjects of special grace, have any just excuse for neglecting to join the church, and neglecting to bind themselves to love and obey God forever. There are, undoubtedly, not a few, who have become the subjects of divine grace, that neglect to name the name of Christ, and to take the bond of the covenant upon them. I call this a neglect, because God has expressly required his friends to profess their love and obedience to him in a public manner, and to confirm their profession by a solemn, covenant transaction. And since the gospel day, Christ has expressly required his friends to confess him before men and celebrate the memorials of his death. His command applies to and binds all, who love him in sincerity. If any, therefore, who are become reconciled to him upon the terms of the gospel, do not profess him before the world, they neglect to perform a plain, positive, and important duty, for which it is impossible, that they should have any good excuse. But it is very evident, that such persons often do endeavor to excuse themselves before God and their own consciences. I proceed, therefore, to examine their excuses.

Some say, that they are in doubt whether they ever have become the subjects of special grace. But I am speaking to doubting christians, who are essentially different from doubting sinners, who never were the subjects of special grace. Doubting christians have been the subjects of special grace, for the love of God

has been shed abroad in their hearts. Such persons have no right to doubt, because they have the witness in themselves, that they have been born of God. This evidence, they ought to see, and renounce their doubts. Those, who plead their doubts for the neglect of their duty, often acknowledge, that at times, they do see evidence of a change of heart. They do sensibly exercise love to God, faith in Christ, and obedience to his commands ; and if such evidence and light should continue, without interruption, their hopes would overcome their doubts, and they should see their way clear to join the church. But have they any ground to expect, if they are christians, that their holy exercises ever will become uniform and uninterrupted ? If not, why do they wait for that, which they know they shall never find ? While they justify themselves by this excuse, their own mouth condemns them. They have evidence, and acknowledge they have evidence, of saving grace, which is the evidence upon which they ought to act in making a public profession of religion. They therefore neglect a known duty, and are utterly inexcusable. But they say, they are waiting for more grace, to give them more evidence ; but can they expect more grace to give them more evidence, while they neglect their duty, and resist the evidence, which God has graciously given them ? The truth is, those, who plead the want of evidence of grace, while they possess grace, assign a reason to themselves and others for their neglect, which is not the true cause of it. They are governed by some wrong, latent motive which they do not perceive, and for their blindness to it, they are wholly to blame.

Some, who are the subjects of special grace, plead in excuse for neglecting to join the church, that they are afraid the church would not receive them, if they should offer themselves to join. But let us examine what possible grounds they can reasonably have for such apprehensions. Are they afraid, that they are not capable of relating their internal views and exercises so clearly and intelligibly, as that others may understand them, and exercise charity towards them? There is no ground for this apprehension. For those, who have but little doctrinal knowledge are capable of expressing the views and exercises they have had, in respect to God, and their own hearts, and in respect to Christ, who suffered and died for them, and are quite as likely to give satisfactory evidence of a change of heart as others, who have much greater speculative knowledge. Or are they afraid, that the church will not judge candidly and impartially of the account they give of their hearts and conduct? This is an unreasonable fear, and looks like a groundless suspicion of the church. Though there may be undue prejudices in some individual or individuals, yet it is not to be supposed that the church as a body will be destitute of candour and impartiality. And the suspicion ought to be given up, as it ought never to have existed. Or does a fear of not being accepted arise from a low and humiliating sense of their own unworthiness? If this be really the case, they will not fail to discover it, and when discovered, will be a recommendation, rather than an objection, in the minds of the church. The fear of not being received by the church, let it arise from what cause it may, is no excuse for any persons not making a public profession and joining the church.

Some, who are the subjects of special grace, often plead in excuse for neglecting to make a public profession of religion, that they fear they should do more dishonor, than honor to religion, if they should make a public profession and join the church. No christians ought to indulge such thoughts as these. As they have really embraced the gospel, they stand entitled to the spirit of promise, and are actually subjects of sanctifying as well as regenerating grace. He, that has begun a good work in them, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. Their fear arises from a species of unbelief, which is entirely inexcusable. If they sincerely desire to honor religion, they have no more reason to fear that they shall not honor it, than other christians have. And if this were a good excuse in them, it would be as good an excuse for all others neglecting to make a public profession. Those, who make this excuse, may really fear, that they may suffer reproach and opposition from the world, if they should profess religion, and this is the secret cause of their neglect.--- If they should discover this to be true, they must condemn themselves, and delay no longer. For no man can be a true disciple of Christ unless he is willing to take up his cross, and follow him. Some, who are the subjects of special grace, we hear plead in excuse for neglecting to profess religion and joining the church, that they see others, who appear to be the subjects of special grace, and better qualified than they are to profess religion, live in the long neglect of this duty. This is a vain and and groundless excuse ; for they may be mistaken in respect to the qualifications of others ; and if they are not, they have no right to follow their bad example. They are stumbling blocks, and must an-

swer for the great injury they do to themselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ. It is to be feared, however, that this is one of the most common and most consoling excuses that many make for neglecting to join the church. But can any subject of special grace really believe that the neglect of others, will excuse his neglect? The excuse is too grossly absurd ever to be made.

Some, who are the subjects of special grace, endeavour to excuse themselves for neglecting to join the church where they are, because some of the members are irregular, and the church neglect to watch over them, or to reprove them, or to cast them out from their communion. A church may be in such a feeble, declining, luke-warm state. But this is no reason, why those, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and desire to promote his sinking cause, should neglect to name his name, and promote his cause. But rather a strong reason for their uniting with his few friends, to purify, strengthen, and revive religion, and to rectify whatever is amiss in the church. The criminal neglect, imperfection, or insincerity of others, will not contaminate them, or prevent their holding communion with Christ at his table. The excuse savours too much of spiritual pride, and looks like trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others. Neither this, nor any other excuse, that can be made, will justify any, who are subjects of special grace, for neglecting to make a public profession of religion and not joining the church. I have said so much upon this point, with a view to awaken the attention and convince the consciences of doubting and delaying christians, and not of doubting and de-

laying sinners ; for they have no right to take God's covenant into their mouths. But it behoves the subjects of special grace, to join themselves to the Lord and to his people, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten.

2. If the subjects of special grace always desire to profess religion and partake of divine ordinances ; then so long as they neglect their duty, they must necessarily feel unhappy. They continually experience a painful conflict in their minds. Their holy and unholy desires are opposed to each other, and their hearts are at variance with their conscience. Their conscience imperiously calls upon them to do their duty, and condemns them for their criminal neglect, and what gracious exercises they have, keep conscience awake and alive to do its office. So that they live in a state of constant self-condemnation. They experience an unhappiness, which they never experienced before they became the subjects of special grace. They feel an aversion to the world, which they once loved, and cannot enjoy it. They feel an aversion to the friendship of the world, which they once loved, and cannot enjoy it. Though they find some pleasure in thinking of God, and in reading his word ; yet that very pleasure condemns them for the neglect of a known duty. They lose an intimacy with those, with whom they were once intimate, and are afraid of an intimacy with the professed friends of God, lest they and the world should see and reproach them for their criminal inconsistency of conduct. Because they neglect other important duties, that they may appear less inconsistent to themselves and others. But still, they cannot get rid of their self-inconsistency, and self-condemnation, but

live a painful and unhappy life. That this is true, I appeal to such, as live in hope against hope, and in the habitual neglect of known duty.

3. While the subjects of special grace neglect to join the church, they live in a very sinful, as well as unhappy manner. They greatly injure both themselves and religion. They injure themselves, by depriving themselves of that peace and comfort, which they might enjoy in communion with God and his people. They injure religion by neglecting to perform those peculiar and important duties, by which it is to be promoted in the world. They injure the friends of God by practically joining with the world in neglecting and opposing the cause, which they desire to promote, and have bound themselves to promote. They practically justify the impenitent in their impenitence and unbelief. They practically justify the penitent and believing, in neglecting to profess their faith and love, and to bind themselves to obedience. The more upright and amiable they appear, the more they injure the cause of God and the souls of men, by the weight and influence of their criminal example. There are no persons, perhaps, whose example the world more applaud, and are more fond of employing in excuse and justification of their own faulty negligence. It highly concerns these persons in particular, to prepare the way of the Lord, by giving up themselves to him and his people in a perpetual covenant. If they would come out from the world, and appear against them, they would carry conviction to their consciences, and awaken them to flee from the wrath to come. It has always been found, that professing religion and entering into covenant with God has had a greater effect than almost any other

scene or circumstance, to awaken and alarm the careless and secure. And do the negligent subjects of special grace, believe this to be true? And can they with any inward peace and comfort, still continue to neglect a duty so important to themselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ?

4. It appears from what has been said, that some who have long entertained a hope of being the subjects of special grace, must soon give up their hope, if they continue to neglect joining the church. A well grounded hope of the grace of God, has in all ages and in all places, led the subjects of such a hope to join themselves to the Lord and to his people. And if the hope of any does not produce this effect, have they not reason to fear, that their hope is built on a false and sandy foundation, and ought to be given up? They have reason to fear, that they have mistaken nature for grace, and that they are still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. If this be the case of any, their duty is plain and important, to renounce their self-righteousness and self-dependance, and cast themselves upon the unpromised mercy of God, and sincerely to commit their spiritual and eternal concerns to his wise and sovereign disposal.

Finally, it appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that it highly concerns those, who have entered into covenant with God, to be stedfast in his covenant, and persevere in universal obedience. The bond, by which they have freely and voluntarily bound themselves, is extremely solemn, and infinitely and perpetually binding. It is death to go back from following the Lord, and it is highly displeasing to him, to be-

come weary in well-doing. If you do not forsake him, he will never leave, or forsake you, but punctually fulfil the great and precious promises, that he has made to you, and bound himself by an oath to fulfil. Trust in him and he will keep you in perfect peace.

SERMON VII.

SAINTS DESIRE TO SEE THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.

PSALM XXVII. 4—*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*

David was a man of war from his youth; and during the greater part of his reign, his duty called him to head his armies and lead them forth against his enemies, who were almost perpetually invading his kingdom. And though he was willing to follow the voice of God in his providence, yet he sincerely regretted his necessary absence from the house of God.---Every revolving sabbath renewed and increased his strong desires after the precious privileges and enjoyments of the sanctuary. And he was led, on some sacred day of rest, to compose this psalm, in which he expresses the pious feelings of his heart, and his ardent wishes to meet God in the place where he recorded his name, and displayed the moral excellencies of his character. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, *to behold the beauty of the Lord*, and to inquire in his temple." It was his sincere desire, that his business might always admit of his being in the house of God every sabbath; and he determined, as far as possible, to order his secular concerns so, as he might constantly attend the services of

the sanctuary. For, he says, he viewed this the greatest privilege on earth. "*One* thing have I desired," that is, I have desired one thing above all others; and that is, to enjoy, without interruption, the public worship of God in his house. This he desired above all things, because it gave him the best opportunity of beholding the beauty of the Lord, and of knowing his mind and will revealed in his word. All good men feel as the King of Israel felt, and desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, as he displays it in the assembly of his saints, who have a spiritual discerning of spiritual things. This is the plain truth suggested to our present consideration; That good men desire to see the beauty of the Lord. It is proposed,

I. To show in what the beauty of the Lord consists;

II. To show that good men are capable of seeing his beauty; And

III. To show why they desire to see it.

I. Let us consider in what the beauty of the Lord consists. We call nothing beautiful but what is pleasing; and we call nothing pleasing in a moral agent, but what is morally excellent, or truly virtuous. The beauty of the Lord, therefore, must signify that in his moral character, which is pleasing to a virtuous and benevolent heart. His beauty is the beauty of holiness. There is no moral excellence in his necessary existence, independence, omnipresence, omnipotence, or omniscience. These natural attributes, separately considered, are neither morally good, nor morally evil; and are either lovely or hateful, according to the heart that governs them. Under the influence of a malevolent heart, they would be infinitely odious and detesta-

ble ; but under the influence of a benevolent heart, they are great and amiable perfections. The moral beauty and excellence of the Deity lies altogether in his heart, which is purely and perfectly benevolent. God is love, which constitutes his supreme beauty and comprizes all that is virtuous and morally excellent in his nature.--- Pure, disinterested, universal benevolence forms the most beautiful and amiable character conceivable.--- We cannot conceive of any greater excellence in God than a heart full of perfect goodness ; and such goodness the scripture assures us fills and governs his vast, all-comprehensive mind." " There is none good but one, that is God. He is good, and does good. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." When Moses besought him to shew him his glory, and he granted his petition, he did nothing more than to cause all his goodness to pass before him. All his goodness comprehends all his moral perfections. His holiness, his justice, and his mercy and grace, are only so many branches of his universal goodness. In a word, every thing that is beautiful, amiable, and praise worthy in the Supreme Being, consists in the infinitude of his goodness. I now proceed to show,

II. That good men are capable of seeing this moral beauty of the divine character.

Sinners can see every thing in God but this moral beauty. To this they are totally blind. " The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The more fully and clearly the moral beauty of the Lord is displayed before the minds of sinners, the more they hate and oppose it. None, therefore, but real chris-

tians, or those, who have been born again, and become partakers of the divine nature, are capable of seeing the moral beauty of that pure love, which forms the moral glory and excellence of the Deity. But all, who are holy as God is holy, can discern the beauty of his holiness. The apostle speaking in the name of christians says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When he renews the hearts of men, or sheds abroad his love in them, he gives them a spiritual discerning of spiritual things, and causes them to discern the supreme excellence of his moral character. This the apostle John declares in the most explicit terms. He says, "He that loveth not knoweth not God." But on the other hand, he asserts, "That love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." And again he says, God is love: and he, that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." These declarations are agreeable to reason as well as to the feelings of all real christians. For seeing the beauty of any object, and loving that object, are precisely the same thing.

After the heart perceives the amiableness of any object, there is nothing more implied in loving it. So when any man perceives the divine character to be lovely, there is nothing more necessary in order to love it. Of course, all who love God, do actually see his moral beauty and excellence. This will more clearly appear, if we consider it in another point of view. Those, who love God, have the same kind of love, that God has and exercises towards them and all holy creatures. They are holy as God is holy, and

feel as God feels. Being benevolent, they discover the beauty of benevolence, wherever it is displayed by the kind parent of the universe. And as he has infinitely more benevolence than all other beings; so he appears infinitely more amiable and beautiful than any other being in the universe. They see him to be just such a being, as they desire him to be. They do not desire the least alteration in one of his perfections. They are pleased to see him as holy, as just, as good, and as gracious as he is; and as wise and powerful as he is to do all his pleasure. They see God as he sees himself, glorious in holiness, and of consequence, glorious in all his other attributes, which are under the influence of his perfectly benevolent heart. They see supreme beauty and excellence in his power and wisdom, in his justice and sovereignty, in his mercy and grace, as they are continually exercised for the highest good of the universe. This leads me to show,

III. Why good men sincerely desire to see the beauty of the Lord. Moses besought God with great importunity to show him his glory. Job ardently desired to draw near to God, and to have clear views of his supreme excellence. He says, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come near unto his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot find him. On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him." Job saw the natural perfections of God in all his works; but he did not, at this time, see the beauty and glory of his moral perfections, which had often afforded him the highest enjoyment. David had very strong desires, from time to time, to see and enjoy the supreme beauty and glory of the divine character. It

was the one thing, upon which, above all others, he set his heart. Hear what he says in the fourth psalm, on this subject. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." And in the sixty-third psalm, he describes the longings of his heart after peculiar discoveries of the divine glory. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and *thy glory*, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Such are the strong and sensible desires of good men to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enjoy the manifestations of his glory. But the question before us is, Why do good men have such peculiar desires to see the moral beauty and glory of God? Here several satisfactory reasons may be given. And,

1. Because the goodness of God, which forms his supreme excellence, spreads a glory over all the other perfections of his nature. Saints as well as others can see no excellence in the greatness and majesty of God, separately from his perfect holiness and benevolence. David beheld God and was troubled, when he saw him without a view of his moral beauty. Good men can take no satisfaction in contemplating upon the mere existence, immensity, majesty, and supremacy of the creator and governor of all things, while they do not realize his pure, perfect, universal goodness. But when they view him as the God of love, and see the beauty of his benevolence, they take complacency in his eternity, immutability, almighty power, and ab-

solute sovereignty. His goodness spreads a glory over the greatness of his wisdom, the greatness of his knowledge, the greatness of his power, and of his material and intellectual kingdom. His goodness, which is pure and perfect benevolence, renders his wisdom a benevolent wisdom, his knowledge a benevolent knowledge, his power a benevolent power, and his universal supremacy a benevolent supremacy. Those, who have seen and tasted that the Lord is good, view all his great and adorable perfections as adorned with the beauty of holiness; and can say to him as David did, "whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that we desire beside thee." And as they know that a view of the beauty of the Lord, will put them into the sensible enjoyment of all his perfections; so they ardently desire to see his moral beauty and excellence. Nothing short of this can afford them complete satisfaction. David did not expect to enjoy perfect blessedness, until he should have clear and constant views of the beauty of the Lord in the kingdom of glory, which he joyfully anticipated. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."

2. Good men desire to see the beauty of the Lord, because it spreads a beauty over his works as well as character. It is his ultimate end in creation, that gives a glory to every thing he has made. If his goodness be not seen in creating the heavens and the earth, in forming angels and men, and in giving existence to every sensitive nature, there is no moral beauty perceived in any of the works of his hands. It is only when saints see the earth to be full of the goodness of the Lord, that they discern the moral beauty of the

works of creation. While his moral excellence is out of their sight, they view the world just as other men view it; but when they spiritually discern the beauty of his holy and benevolent heart, the heavens appear to declare his glory, and the firmament to show his handy work. They see his glory in the forests, in the fields, in the fruits of the earth, and in every rational, animate, and inanimate, object. God's good design in every thing he has made, spreads a divine glory over the whole face of nature, which gives a peculiar pleasure to every pious heart. David often felt and expressed such a pleasure in such a view of the works of God. At one time he cries out in raptures, "O that men would praise the Lord, for all his goodness, and wonderful works." And at another time he prays, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord be upon us." That is, let God display his goodness, and make his people see it. Whenever any of mankind behold the beauty of God's goodness, they immediately discover a divine glory spread over all his works. How often do those, who are called out of darkness into marvellous light, stand and admire the works of creation, on account of the moral beauty they then see in them, but never saw before. A clear view of the beauty of the Lord never fails to put good men into the sensible enjoyment of the world. Viewing it as his world, and as full of his goodness, it gives them as much satisfaction, as if it were all actually put into their hands. Hence they ardently desire to see the beauty of the Lord, that the world which often gives them so much trouble, might become a source of the purest pleasure and enjoyment.

3. Saints desire to see the beauty of the Lord, because this spreads a beauty and glory over all the conduct of God. The ways of providence are often dark and mysterious, and beyond the comprehension of finite, short-sighted creatures. The world is governed in a manner, which is extremely different from that which mankind are ready to imagine would be wisest and best. And even good men have been greatly perplexed with the strange and unaccountable things, which often take place in the world. Job and David were unable to account for the prosperity of the wicked, and the adversity of the righteous. Jacob was involved in great darkness under the evils, which fell upon him.--- And all the children of God have experienced similar trials. But when, like David, they go into the sanctuary and behold the beauty of the Lord, the clouds vanish, and in his light, they see light. While they behold the perfect goodness of God, and realize that in all events, he is seeking the best interest of his whole family in heaven and earth, they see a beauty in all the dispensations of his providence. In perceiving the beauty of his goodness, they perceive a beauty in all his ways, as well as in all his works. The psalmist, after contemplating the wonders of his divine providence in the earth and in the ocean, makes a very pertinent and instructive remark. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The perfect goodness of God, in ordering all events, spreads a glory over all his dark and mysterious dispensations, which causes the wise and good to rejoice in his universal government. Hence they ardently desire, while they are passing through the dark and trying

scenes of this present evil world, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and discern his loving kindness in all the dispensations of providence. This is the only thing that can give them that peace, which the world cannot give, nor take away. I may add,

4. Good men ardently desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, because it spreads a light and beauty over his word. The Bible is full of darkness to those, who have not a spiritual discerning of spiritual things. Unholy men often complain, that they cannot understand the scriptures, and reconcile the dark and inconsistent things contained them. And the very imperfect discernment, which good men have of the beauty of the Lord, often subjects them to great difficulties in underderstanding his word. The history of his conduct towards angels, towards our first parents, towards the Jews, towards the heathens, and towards those, who embrace and reject the gospel, often appears dark to the children of God. So do the commands, prohibitions, and threatenings of the divine law. So do divine invitations and promises. So do the predictions of great future events. And so do the final decisions of the great and last day. But a clear view of the beauty of divine benevolence spreads a beauty over all these dark and difficult things in scripture; and enables those, who are holy as God is holy, just as God is just, and good as God is good, to see why he commands, all men to love him supremely upon pain of his everlasting displeasure; why he saves a part and only a part of mankind; why he causes so many natural and moral evils to abound; why he has conducted all things as he has done; and why he will settle all the affairs of the universe in the manner he has told us in his word. In

deed, it is the moral beauty, glory, and rectitude, of the Deity, which spreads a supreme glory over himself and over all his works.

I shall conclude at present with one reflection.

It appears from this subject, that the worthy communicants at the table of Christ have a precious opportunity of seeing and enjoying the beauty of the Lord.--- God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.--- God has made the brightest display of his goodness, which is the supreme excellence of his character in so loving the world, as to give his dearly beloved Son to pour out his soul unto death on the cross, to make atonement for the sins of his guilty and perishing creatures, and to open the way for their restoration to his forfeited favor. While Christ crucified is clearly exhibited before the eyes of his enlightened followers, by the symbols of his body and blood, they have the most precious opportunity, that they can have this side of heaven, to behold the beauty of the Lord, shining with its brightest lustre in the face of Jesus Christ. Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, that you may be changed into the same image from glory to glory.--- The season will be delightful and edifying, if you please to make it so, by grateful reflections and joyful anticipations.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be true, as has been said, that the supreme beauty or glory of God consists in his pure and universal goodness; then sinners have God for that, for which alone, they ought to love him supremely. It

cannot be denied, that they are disaffected to God ; that their heart is alienated from him, and that they have a carnal mind, which is enmity against him, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. But why are they enemies to him ? They do not hate him for any of his natural attributes. They do not hate him because he is eternal, self-existent, independent, all-wise, or all-powerful. They have no objections against his having such an existence, and possessing such perfections. Why then do they hate him ? No other reason can be given for their hating him, but his goodness in employing all his perfections to promote the most wise and benevolent purposes. If he would employ them solely for their personal, private good, they would be highly pleased, that he not only exists, but that he governs all things. But he has told them in his word, and confirmed it by his providence, that he is not altogether such an one as themselves. He has required them to exercise pure, disinterested love, and forbidden them to exercise the least partial, selfish affection. He has declared, that he will reign in righteousness, and bring the private interests of individuals into subordination to his own glory and the higher interests of the universe. And who can say, this is not an expression of pure, perfect, disinterested, universal goodness ? But it is for this, and this only, that sinners hate him. Their eyes are evil, because he is good. They hate his moral character, which is his supreme glory, beauty, and excellence, with perfect hatred. Their selfish, stout hearts say, that he shall not reign over them. His goodness has no form or beauty in their eyes, wherefore they should love it. Though there are many shades of difference in the external

conduct of sinners, yet they all agree to hate God, and to hate him precisely for the same thing, that is, for his goodness, for which they ought to love him supremely. Why do sinners murmur and repine under divine providence? because it displays divine goodness. Why do sinners hate the Bible? because it displays divine goodness. Why do sinners deny the Bible? because it displays divine goodness.—Why do sinners deny the existence of God? because they suppose if he exists, he must be good Every sinner says in his heart, there is no God. That is, he wishes there were no God of perfect goodness.—Though many say, that the only reason why sinners hate God, is because they are ignorant of his moral beauty and excellence; yet the truth is, that they hate him, because they do know the excellence of his moral character. Christ, who knew the hearts of sinners, said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

2. If saints sincerely and ardently desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, then they are essentially different from sinners. Saints view the goodness of God as constituting his supreme beauty and glory, and sincerely desire to see the glory of his goodness; but sinners do not desire to see his goodness, and when it is most clearly exhibited before them, they hate it more than any other trait in the divine character. These different views and feelings, in respect to the supreme beauty and glory of God, demonstrate that saints are radically and essentially different from sinners. It does not arise from knowledge on the one side, nor from ignorance on the other. They both know enough of divine goodness to love it, and to hate it.—

Why then do saints love it, while sinners hate it?-- Sinners are very fond of believing, that saints do not essentially differ from them; and often endeavor to account for the external difference in their conduct, in the same way, that the accuser of the brethren, attempted to account for Job's external conduct. They suppose that it is owing to their selfishness, that they pay external obedience to the divine commands. They suppose they outwardly pay respect to God, either because they have received, or expect to receive peculiar favors from him, and not because they love him for the moral beauty and excellence of his character.--- But it appears from what saints say of themselves, and from what God says of them, that they love him for his supreme moral excellence. And if this be true, there is no way to account for it, but by supposing, that saints have a new, a better and more benevolent heart than sinners, which is a radical and essential difference. So that if God should place saints and sinners in precisely the same circumstances, they would feel and act differently towards him. If he should place them in the same state of prosperity, they would feel and act differently towards him. Or if he should place them in the same state of adversity, they would feel and act differently towards him. Or if he should place them in heaven, they would feel and act differently towards him. This has been demonstrated in a thousand instances. Saul and David were placed on the throne of Israel, but they felt and acted differently.--- Judas and the apostles were placed under similar circumstances, but they felt and acted differently. Let saints and sinners be placed in the same situation, in any part of the universe, and they would feel and act

differently. There must be therefore an essential, radical difference between the hearts of saints and the hearts of sinners; while the latter hate, and the former love the moral excellence of the divine character.

3. If God be perfectly good and his goodness spreads a moral beauty and excellence over all his perfections; then there is nothing to hinder sinners from loving him but merely their own *selfishness*. If they possessed any true benevolence or disinterested love, they would discern the glory and excellence of the divine benevolence and feel a pleasure in cordial reconciliation to God. And there is nothing that prevents their discerning the beauty and glory of God's benevolence, which spreads a beauty and glory over all his other perfections, and all the displays of them, in his works, in his providence, and in his word, but their selfishness. They are very loth, however, to own that this is the only difficulty in the way of their loving God. They sometimes plead, that their ignorance of God prevents their loving him. But they have no ignorance in their understanding, but what arises from the blindness of their hearts; and notwithstanding this blindness, they know enough of God to hate him, and consequently enough to love him. They more commonly and confidently plead, that they have a hard and evil heart, which they can neither soften, nor change. But they have no heart but what consists in free, voluntary exercises, which they are able to change, and which God requires them to change. It is only because they hate God, that they cannot love him. But can their hating God, whose goodness renders him infinitely amiable, be a good excuse for not loving him? Their reason and conscience tell them, that all the excuses they ever have made, or can make.

only serve to discover their selfishness and criminality in hating a being, whom they are able and bound to love with supreme affection.

4. If the supreme glory of God consists in his goodness ; then the more clearly his goodness is exhibited before the minds of sinners, the more difficult they always find it to be to love him. Christ exhibited the impartial, disinterested, universal goodness of God in the clearest and strongest light in his public and private discourses ; and of all the doctrines he preached, this was the most disagreeable and stumbling to sinners. They called it a hard saying, and some said, "Who then can be saved ?" It was too hard for the amiable young man to hear and bear, and he went away sorrowful. While sinners have a low and obscure view of the moral glory and excellence of the divine character, they are apt to think that they can, and even do love God. But when his pure, holy, impartial benevolence is clearly exhibited, they are ready to lament their moral weakness, and cry that it is impossible for them to love God for their carnal mind is perfect enmity against him. Their selfishness cannot be reconciled to his benevolence. And the more clearly his love and benevolence is explained and illustrated, the more difficulty they find in seeing the supreme beauty and glory of it, and he appears less amiable, than the most unamiable and odious being in the universe. His pure, disinterested love, instead of spreading a beauty over all his perfections, and works, and ways, and words, involves the whole world and whole universe in darkness, in the view of their totally selfish hearts. Is there a person, who has been under genuine convictions, that does not know this to be true ? There

is no way better adapted to determine whether a man be really blind, than to exhibit light before him ; and so there is no way better adapted to determine whether sinners are morally blind, than to exhibit the supreme beauty and glory of the divine character before them, and inquire whether they see and love it. Christ said he came into the world to make them blind, who said they saw. And he effectually did it. And so do all, who preach as he did. Those, who are spiritually blind, complain bitterly of such preaching and such preachers. They say they cannot understand them. And when they say so, they prove the total, moral blindness of their own sinful hearts.

5. If saints desire to see the beauty of the Lord; then we see one good reason why they love to attend the public worship of God in his house constantly. David, who desired to see the beauty of the Lord, loved to attend the services of the sanctuary constantly. He loved to be with God in his house and with his people, where God made the brightest displays of his glory and the clearest revelation of his will. He ardently desired constantly to attend the worship and ordinances of God in his house, for the sake of two things especially. One was to gain the knowledge, and the other was to gain the enjoyment of God.--- These desires he expresses in the strongest terms in the text. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." What is this one thing ? It is "to *dwell* in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord ;" that is, to enjoy him ; and "to inquire in his temple," where his will is revealed in his word. These same desires he as clearly and fervently expresses at different times,

In the sixty-third psalm he devoutly says, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." In the eighty-fourth psalm he devoutly cries, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Those, who have seen and tasted that the Lord is good, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby in knowledge and grace, and behold and enjoy the beauty of the Lord. And since these spiritual and divine favors may always be found and always enjoyed in the house and worship of God, all good men desire constantly to attend the services of the sanctuary, and deeply regret being providentially prevented. They will take more care and surmount more and greater difficulties to attend public worship, than to attend to their own personal, secular concerns. It must be allowed, therefore, that those professors, who constantly attend the worship and ordinances of God in his house, do exhibit one beautiful evidence, that they love the courts of the Lord and find a pleasure in inquiring in his temple, and beholding his beauty. While on the other hand, it cannot be denied, that those, who are careless and negligent in attending the sacred duties and services of the sanctuary, lack one evidence of their sincerity. Here then let me ask those, who have come to the table of Christ this day, whether they have exhibited more evidence of their sincerity, than of their insincerity, in these respects. There is no doubt, that some have exhibited more evidence of sincerity, than of insincerity.

And can there be a doubt, whether some have not exhibited more evidence of insincerity, than of sincerity?

This subject now speaks both to the sincere, and to the insincere. To the sincere it says, you have desired to see the beauty of the Lord in the sanctuary, and you have seen and enjoyed it there. You have inquired in his temple, and grown in knowledge and grace. You resolve to dwell in the house of the Lord, and tread his courts every sabbath, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, beseeching God to shew you his glory. He has promised to meet you and bless you where he has recorded his name, as long as you live, and afterwards to fix you in his temple above, to go out no more forever. Can there be a brighter prospect opened before you? Can you be bound by stronger obligations, and have greater or more endearing motives set before you to be constant, in running the christian race; in attending christian ordinances, and in seeking christian enjoyments?

But this subject speaks a very different language to the insincere, who have not seen, nor desired to see the beauty of the Lord. You have always been in darkness. Your darkness is increasing by all the light which God has exhibited before you, by his works, by his providence, by his word, and by his ordinances.--- But your present darkness is nothing in comparison with that, to which you are exposed, when the time shall come, which will fix the state of both sincere and insincere professors. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

SERMON VIII.

NATURE AND EFFECTS OF WALKING WITH GOD.

GENESIS v. 24—*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him.*

Enoch was one of the ancient patriarchs; and one of the seventh generation from Adam. His father, Jared, was a godly man, who, it seems, walked within his house with a perfect heart and brought up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For his son Enoch appears to have been pious from his youth, though he lived in a day of great degeneracy, when the friends of God were few and the world were rapidly departing from the paths of virtue and filling the earth with violence. In such a day, he lived in a peculiar manner. Instead of following the multitude to do evil, he walked with God, and secured his peculiar favor. "He was not; for God took him." This phrase, it is natural to suppose, denotes a special token of the divine favor; and the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews confirms this supposition. "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Such a happy removal, from this evil world to a far better one, was a signal mark of the divine approbation. From this instance of the divine conduct, we may justly conclude,

That God will manifest some peculiar tokens of his favor to those, who walk with him. I shall,

I. Consider what is implied in walking with God: And,

II. Show that God will manifest some peculiar tokens of his favor to those, who walk with him.

I. We are to consider what is implied in walking with God.

1. This implies reconciliation to God. All mankind come into the world in a state of moral depravity. Their hearts by nature are unholy and unfriendly to God. They go astray from him as soon as they are born. "They say unto him, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Instead of loving him, they hate him; and instead of walking with him, they flee from him. They are opposed to him; and he is opposed to them. There is a mutual and irreconcilable alienation from each other. And until this mutual alienation of affection be removed, it is morally impossible for men to walk with God. For, "how can two walk together except they are agreed?" But God cannot become reconciled to them, before they become reconciled to him. The reconciliation must begin on their part; and when they become cordially reconciled to him, he is cordially reconciled to them. He loves those, who love him; and is ready to walk with them. Though they may appear to walk with him, before their disaffection to him is removed; yet they cannot walk with him in sincerity and truth before the native enmity of their carnal mind is slain, and the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts.—Though Enoch early walked with God, yet he did not walk acceptably with him, until he had a new heart.

which was after God's own heart and which laid a permanent foundation of mutual reconciliation and friendship.

2. Those, who walk with God, maintain a steady couse of cordial obedience to his commands. They esteem his precepts concerning all things to be right.--- They delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. They imitate the example of Zacharias and Elisabeth, "who were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They are not like those, who David says, "Keep not the covenant of God; and refuse to walk in his law:" Nor like those, who Nehemiah says, "are disobedient, rebellious, and cast the divine law behind their backs." Walking denotes continued and persevering motion; and those, who sincerely and cordially walk with God, are not weary in well-doing, but are stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in obedience to the divine commands. Thus Enoch walked steadily and perseveringly in obedience to God, while the world was full of violence. Thus Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb walked in persevering obedience to God, while the great mass of the people grew faint and weary and perished in the wilderness. And thus the apostles continued to follow Christ, whilst "many of his professed disciples went back and walked no more with him." Our Savior pressed the duty of perseverance in obedience upon all his professed followers; and plainly told them that unless they endured to the end, they would not be saved. The true disciples of Christ are willing to follow him whithersoever he leads them, through every stage and circumstance of life; though they may sometimes hesitate and faulter in their christian course.

3. Those, who walk with God, maintain an intimate and habitual intercourse with God by their daily devotions. It is by this intercourse, that they draw near to God, and he draws near to them and gives them a realizing sense of his presence and assistance. Prayer is a solemn mode of their meditating upon the being, the perfections, the presence, and government of God, and upon their own weakness, wants and imperfections. It is by their devotional exercises, that they live as seeing God who is invisible, that they confide in his faithfulness, rely upon his assistance, and enjoy communion and fellowship with him. David says to God, "Blessed is the man, whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." The apostle James says to christians, "Draw nigh to God; and he will draw nigh to you." The apostle Paul says to christians, "Seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Christ says, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he, that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."--- Those, who walk with God, habitually feel their need of his assistance in duty, of his support in trials and of the light of his countenance in seasons of doubt and darkness. They durst not lean to their own understandings, nor trust in their own hearts, but feel the propriety of acknowledging God in all their ways, that he may direct their steps. For these reasons, they habitually endeavor to maintain an intimate intercourse with God in their daily devotions. As they desire to

do every thing to the glory of God, so they pray to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long; and as they desire to be careful for nothing, so in every thing, by prayer and supplication, they make known their requests unto God. In a word, they walk with God, by living a holy and devout life.

4. Walking with God implies approving and walking in his way. Those, who walk with God, regard the operations of his hand in the dispensations of his providence. God is continually carrying into execution his wise, and holy, and gracious designs, by which he is displaying his perfections and speaking to the eyes, and ears, and heart, and consciences of mankind. David declares, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them, that have pleasure therein."—And he says to God with respect to himself, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands." God is to be seen in all his works and ways; and those, who walk with him, have eyes to see him and ears to hear him and hearts to perceive him in all the dispensations of his providence. Accordingly, David declares, "The Lord is known by the judgment he executeth."—And again speaking of the dispensations of providence, he says, "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The prophet Isaiah speaks the same language. "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee. Yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Those, who walk

with God, look through all secondary causes, and view his hand and heart in all he does in respect to themselves in particular, as well as in respect to the world in general. And so far as they see and understand his designs, they cordially approve of them, and are willing to be workers together with him, in carrying them into execution. They mean to obey the voice of his providence, as well as the voice of his word. As they discern the signs of the times; so they mean to feel and act agreeably to them. While Enoch walked with God, and saw how God suffered the triumphing of the wicked, he anticipated their fearful doom, and solemnly warned them of it. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of those, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgments upon all, and to convince all, that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Those who walk with God are governed by his eye, as dutiful children are governed by the eye of the parent. I must add here,

5. That those who walk with God, decline walking with the world. As soon as they begin to walk with God, they resolve to walk with his friends and not with his enemies. It is the peculiar character of good men, that they walk together, and not with the wicked. David says to God "I am a companion of all them that fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." And again he says, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendest not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent, in whom is all my

delight." And he further declares, "Blessed is the man, that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Those, who walk with God, are sensible, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; that it is their duty, not to be conformed to the world; and that it is their safety and happiness to come out from the world and to walk with God, that he may dwell in them, and walk in them, and be their Almighty Father and friend, as he has promised. Now, if those, who walk with God, live such a holy and devout life, as we have described, it is justly to be expected,

II. That he will manifest some peculiar tokens of his favor to them. God translated Enoch, that he should not see death, as a testimony that he pleased him. Since God is pleased with those, who walk with him, we must suppose he will give them some peculiar tokens of his favor. But as they do not merit any favor by walking with him, so he acts as a sovereign in granting his peculiar favors to one and another, when and how he pleases. And among the favors which he usually grants to those, who walk with him, I will mention the following.

1. God will guard them against the frowns of the world. If they were of the world, the world would love his own; but because they are not of the world, but God has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. It is impossible for men to walk with God, without declining to walk with the world, or without reproving, and condemning the world, which never fails to excite their resentment and opposition. God knows therefore, that those who walk with him, stand in need of his constant care and protection:

and accordingly, while they walk with him, he will walk with them and keep them as in the hollow of his hand from the innumerable seen and unseen dangers to which they are continually exposed. We read, "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." This has always been God's usual conduct towards those, who have walked with him.--- Enoch walked with God and preached righteousness to an ungodly world. Though it is probable, that the world, which then began to be filled with violence, wished to wreak their enmity upon Enoch, yet the Lord took him and translated him that he should not see death, by the hand of violence, nor in any other way. This was a signal mark of the divine favor and protection. As Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations and walked with God; so he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, who, while he was about to sweep the whole earth with the besom of destruction, preserved him from sinking and perishing with an ungodly world. God delivered just Lot, when he condemned and overthrew the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob walked with God, who granted them peculiar tokens of his favor, care, and protection, through the numerous evils and dangers to which they were exposed, while pilgrims and strangers on the earth. And while their posterity walked with God, he withheld not his care and protection from them; but when they were but few in number and went from one nation to another and from

one kingdom to another, he suffered no man to do them wrong ; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. So long as the friends of God walk with him, he never fails to spread the wing of his protection over them, which is a peculiar token of his favor.

2. God graciously guards his friends, while they walk with him, from their invisible, as well as, visible enemies. They are continually exposed to the subtile devices and violent assaults of him, who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience and leads them captive at his will. But though his power and dominion are weakened in the hearts of real saints ; yet he endeavors to get advantage against them in their present state of moral imperfection. He knows, that they sometimes wander from God, and when he finds them at a distance from him, he knows, that they are as weak as other men ; and he does not fail to employ his power and subtilty, to blind their minds, corrupt their hearts, and plunge them in darkness, doubts, disobedience and distress. But while they walk closely with God, Satan will not dare to approach them, or if he does, God will enable them to resist his fiery darts and not suffer them to be overcome. This the apostle assures christians for their encouragement and comfort. "Resist the devil ; and he will flee from you." And again he says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Though God suffered Christ to be tempted forty days in the wilderness ; yet he enabled him to resist and

overcome his subtile and malignant adversary. Though God gave liberty to satan to tempt Job; yet while Job kept near to God, he guarded his heart, so that he sinned not. The apostle John says in general concerning every one, who is born of God, "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Though satan desires most ardently to have those who generally walk most closely with God, that he may sift them as wheat; yet God will bruise satan under their feet. It is one of the privileges of the sons of God and a peculiar token of his favor, that he will protect them, while they walk with him, against the wiles of their spiritual enemies.

3. God will give those, who walk with him peculiar evidence of their interest in his special grace. He loves those, who walk with him and will manifest his love to them. He loved Enoch, while he walked with him and before his translation, he gave him this testimony, that he pleased God, and stood high in his favor. How he did this, we are not told; but we may justly conclude, that he did it in some such manner as he made known his special love to other eminent saints. He expressly called Abraham his friend, when he offered up his son upon the altar. He sent a messenger from heaven, to declare, that Daniel was greatly beloved. And he manifested his special love to David, by lifting the light of his countenance upon him. He acknowledges, that he had received this peculiar mark of the divine favor. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." That this gladness,

which God put in his heart, was a peculiar evidence of his being in a state of grace, appears from his praying for such an evidence, when he had lost it. "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and save me for thy mercies' sake. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me.---Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." And this was the peculiar favor, which Moses and Aaron were commanded to ask God to grant his people. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." While saints walk with God, they may expect to have the light of his countenance and the joy of his salvation. He will shine in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. He will give them the spirit of adoption, cause them to cry Abba, Father, and make them know, that they are his children and heirs of everlasting life. This peculiar favor he will grant to his friends, while they walk with him; but no longer. For when they forsake him, he will hide his face from them.

4. God will manifest his peculiar favor to those, who walk with him, by giving them not only inward light and joy and peace and the full assurance of hope; but by granting them outward prosperity.—We are not told, indeed, whether Enoch enjoyed outward prosperity; but we know, that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Job and David and

Solomon enjoyed great external prosperity, while they walked with God. It was also a proverb in Israel; "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." David declares, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. He, "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in season: his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper." Though God does not bestow outward prosperity upon those, who walk with him exclusively; yet when he does bestow it upon them, they ought to view it not only as a blessing, but as a testimony that they please him.

5. Those, who walk with God, have ground to hope for another great and peculiar favor; that is, his gracious and comforting presence, when they leave the world. This peculiar favor he granted to Enoch in a signal manner. He exempted him from the pains and terrors of death; and miraculously translated him from earth to heaven, as a testimony of his being well pleased with his holy, exemplary and heavenly life. And he gave the same testimony of the holy and useful life of Elijah. "And it came to pass, as Elisha and he walked on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Though these are singular cases; yet, all who sincerely and closely walk with God in life, have ground to hope, that he will afford them his gracious and supporting presence in their dying hour. He caused the pious patriarchs to die in peace. David expected to die in peace, for he said to God in health,

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And agreeably to this well-founded hope, his last words expressed peculiar peace and consolation. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." With these bright prospects he fell asleep. It has been often and justly observed, that good men generally die in the same manner, in which they have lived. If they have walked with God and generally enjoyed his gracious presence, they commonly enjoy the light of his countenance in their dying moments and leave the world in peace. God can disarm death of its sting and the grave of its terror, and those who sincerely and closely walk with him, have reason to hope, as well as to desire, that he will give them this peculiar testimony, that they have pleased him, when they come to die.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We may learn from the nature and effects of walking with God, how all true believers may attain to the full assurance of hope. It is a false and unscriptural notion, that assurance is the essence of faith. Men may become really reconciled to God and cordially embrace the gospel, and yet remain very uncertain, whether God is reconciled to them and has received them into the number of his family. Indeed, it is a very common case, that true believers are troubled with doubts and fears, that they have not experienced a saving change and are not in a state of

grace and favor with God, even after they have had a prevailing hope of having experienced a saving change, and actually professed religion But why do so many walk in darkness and enjoy so little satisfactory evidence of their being the children of God, and entitled to his pardoning mercy through the divine Redeemer? It does not appear, that Enoch walked in darkness and saw no light, while he walked with God; but it appears, on the contrary, that he had this testimony that he pleased God and enjoyed the full assurance of hope. And it appears from the account we have in scripture of many other eminent saints, who walked closely with God, that they enjoyed such tokens of the divine approbation, as banished all distressing doubts and fears from their minds. It must, then, be owing to some blameable cause, that real believers do not enjoy the full assurance of hope and that evidence of their gracious state, which excludes painful fears and doubts. If it be true, that God gives peculiar tokens of his favor to those, who sincerely and closely walk with him, then the proper and sure way of attaining satisfactory evidence of a gracious state, is to walk sincerely and closely with him. It is, therefore, because believers, at this day, do not walk with God, as Enoch, Abraham, and many other pious men under both the Mosaic and christian dispensation walked, that they do not attain to the full assurance of hope, as they did. And this is certainly a blameable cause. Believers are now as capable of walking closely and constantly with God, as Enoch was; and God is as ready now to give them the peculiar tokens of his favor, as he was to manifest his peculiar love to him.—Why then do they not give diligence to make their

calling and election sure? It must be owing to their voluntary and criminal negligence. They must blame themselves, if they wander from God, and love to wander from him and justly expose themselves to the hidings of his face, and to the darkness, and doubts, and fears, which follow from it. God has expressly told them, that if they walk with him, he will walk with them; but if they forsake him, he will forsake them. But notwithstanding this, they are very apt to complain of their darkness and doubts, under the hidings of his face, rather than to condemn themselves for departing from him. He gives them tokens of his displeasure and not of his approbation, which ought to lead them to return to him, from whom they have criminally revolted. David did this, and he says he found the happy effects of it. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." If saints would prevent, or remove darkness, doubts and distress from their minds, let them walk closely with God, who will then give them peculiar tokens of their pleasing him, and standing high in his favor.

2. If God manifests peculiar tokens of his favor to those, who walk with him; then they have more to gain, than to lose, by walking with him. Good men often depart from God and conform to the world, for the sake of gaining their friendship, or through fear of losing it and exposing themselves to their reproach, contempt, and opposition. The world love their own, but not those, who come out from them and

walk with God. They feel themselves not only forsaken, but condemned by those, who choose to walk with God, rather than with them, which excites unpleasant and unfriendly feelings in their breasts towards the godly. They have ground to expect, therefore, that they shall lose the friendship of the world and experience the bitter effects of their enmity and opposition. This has been the lot of those, who have sincerely and habitually walked with God, in every age of the world. It seems to be intimated, that Enoch's walking with God excited the mortal enmity of the wicked, who sought his life and would have taken it away, if God had not preserved it, by translating him to heaven. The apostle says, "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." This seems to imply, that his enemies searched for him, and would have slain him, if God had not privately taken him out of the world. And this conjecture seems to be strengthened, by his being placed at the head of that catalogue of worthies mentioned in the eleventh of Hebrews, who walked with God; and many of whom "were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: and wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Though these pious patriarchs lived in an evil day and suffered such an accumulation and complication of evils; yet they gained more than they lost, by walking with God. For, they enjoyed peculiar tokens of his favor. "They all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pil-

grims, on the earth. Wherefore God was not ashamed to be called their God ; and prepared for them a city," to which he triumphantly conveyed them. Now, if the saints of old gained much more than they lost, by walking with God ; then it is very certain, that saints at this day have much more to gain than to lose, by walking with God. They may lose some of their nominal friends, and incur the neglect, reproach, contempt and opposition of the enemies of all righteousness. But what are these losses in comparison with the peculiar tokens of the divine favor ? God is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. He loves those, who love him. He will walk with those, who walk with him. He will guard those, who walk with him, not only against their visible, but invisible enemies. He will give them that peace, which the world cannot give, nor take away. He will give them full assurance of hope. He will afford them all that outward prosperity, which they can reasonably desire. And finally, he will prepare them for a peaceful death and a glorious immortality beyond the grave. Real saints have infinitely more to gain, than they can possibly lose, by walking with God. They are, therefore, always unwise, as well as criminal, when they forget and forsake God and walk with the world, to gain their friendship, or to avoid their frowns. Both their duty and happiness require them to walk constantly and joyfully with God.

3. If God be highly pleased with his friends, while they walk with him ; then he must be highly displeased when they depart from him. The best of saints are more or less inconstant in their walk with God. Though Enoch is not charged with any inconstancy.

yet there can be no doubt but his love to God sometimes abated and he became cold and dull and negligent in walking with God. We know, however, that other eminent saints frequently wandered from God, which was highly displeasing to him and drew down tokens of his just displeasure. As God always takes notice of saints, while they walk with him; so he takes equal notice of them, when they forget and forsake him. If they leave him for a longer, or shorter season, he knows it; and not only so, he knows why they deviate from the path of duty. He knows, that they never forsake him, but for the sake of some inferior worldly object. He sees what mere vanities attract their attention and attachment, and draw them away from him. Of this they are often unconscious. They do not perceive how often, or how much, they suffer their thoughts and affections to wander from him. The world and the things of the world imperceptibly occupy their thoughts and turn them aside from their designed and habitual walk with God. But he always sees all their sinful deviation from the path of duty; and of consequence they appear much more sinful in his view, than their own. Hence says the apostle John, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." These numerous deviations and departures from God, which are highly displeasing to him, are the reasons, why those, who do sometimes walk with God, receive no more peculiar tokens of his favor and so many tokens of his displeasure. They have always reason to expect, when they forget and forsake him, that he will be displeased and some way or other manifest his displeasure towards them and continue the manifestations of it, until they return to him and walk with him.

4. If God will walk with those, who walk with him; then we may justly conclude, that he will cause all those, who once sincerely walked with him to continue walking with him, till they leave the world and enter into eternal rest. He caused Enoch to walk with him three hundred years before he translated him to heaven. And there is reason to believe, that he caused Adam and Seth and Enos and Cainan and Mahalaleel and Jared and Methuselah and Lamech and Noah, to walk with him seven or eight hundred years, though iniquity abounded and the love of many waxed cold and died. God gives all his sincere friends some peculiar tokens of his favor, which he never gives to those, who are not cordially reconciled to him. And one of these peculiar favors is his gracious presence with them, which effectually guards them against both their visible and invisible enemies; so that they cannot cause them to fall away finally. This assurance of final perseverance Christ gave to his true disciples. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." God keeps his eye constantly fixed upon those, who once walk with him, and sees all the evils and dangers, to which they are exposed from the things of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the men of the world and from their great moral imperfection and subtle adversary; and he determines to preserve them and keep them, by his almighty power, through faith unto salvation. And if God be for them, who can be against them? Upon

this solid foundation, the apostle confidently declares, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. It appears from the nature of walking with God, that those, who walk with him, in a day of degeneracy, do peculiar service and honor to religion. The world had been gradually degenerating from Seth to Enoch; and had it not been for them and the other patriarchs, who walked with God and maintained his cause, the world would have been destroyed much sooner than it was. This is evident from one single consideration, that God did not destroy it till there was but one man in it, who walked with him. Seth, Enoch, and the other pious patriarchs were the salt of the earth and the light of the world, till they were taken out of it. Good men have a peculiar opportunity, in a time of great degeneracy, to display the beauty, reality and importance of religion; and to restrain the corruptions of the times. It was evidently owing to the dark times, in which Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David and Daniel lived, that they did so much good, and became so celebrated and distinguished in the world. When iniquity abounds and the love of many nominal saints waxes cold, it tends to fill the minds of those who walk with God, with a holy zeal, fortitude and resolution, to triumph over all opposition and to be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the service of the Lord. A day of degeneracy is a trying day to all, who profess to walk with God; and if they are sincere, will make them shine with peculiar

lustre. It is really a more trying time to professors, than a time of revival of religion. Then insincere professors are naturally, though reluctantly, carried along with the current. But in a time of degeneracy, they are pleasantly and insensibly led astray from God. Though the world be not so universally corrupt now, as it was about the time of Enoch; yet it is more deeply corrupted. Wherever the gospel does not purify, it corrupts the hearts of men. The christian world is far more corrupt than the heathen world. And though the hearts of many individuals, at this day, are softened and sanctified; yet a vast many more are hardened and corrupted: and especially in some places; and in none, perhaps, more than in this.—How small is the number of those, who walk closely and constantly with God, and, like the patriarchs, condemn the world!

6. This subject calls upon all, who have professed to walk with God, to inquire whether they have walked worthy of the vocation, wherewith they are called. Have you received and given evidence of this? Enoch who walked with God, received testimony, that he pleased him; and he gave testimony to the world, that he walked with God, and they saw and hated his testimony. If God gives some tokens of his favor to those, who walk with him, you ought to inquire, whether he has given any of these tokens to you.---Has he given you that peace, which the world cannot give? Has he given you the assurance of hope? Has he kept you near to himself and not suffered you to wander from him? Have you given evidence to the world, that you have walked with God, not only in his special ordinances, but in your daily concerns and in-

tercourse with the world? Have the world claimed you, or opposed you? It is impossible for any to walk closely and constantly with God and not manifest it in a greater or less degree to the world. The men of the world do not feel indifferently to those, who forsake and condemn and oppose them. If you have walked with God, he has given you evidence of it; and the world have given you evidence of it. Be entreated to ascertain, what evidence you have for you, or against you. You may and ought to do this, for your present and future peace.

Finally, this subject exhorts all, who have not hitherto walked with God, to walk with him. He commands you to walk with him. He invites you to walk with him. He promises you the highest tokens of his favor, if you will walk with him. He will protect you from your visible and invisible enemies; he will give you inward peace and tranquility; he will prepare you for a peaceful death and a blessed immortality. But if you refuse to walk with him, he has threatened to banish you from his presence. And he has recorded for your warning and admonition his awful treatment of those, who have refused to walk with him. The old world refused, and were swept away by the besom of destruction. Sodom and Gomorrah refused to walk with him; and he set them forth as ensamples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The Jews in Christ's day refused to follow him and walk with him, and he destroyed them by most exemplary judgments. And God still says, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay." Are you prepared to meet such tremendous consequences of divine wrath? Turn, turn ye, therefore, for why will ye die?

SERMON IX.

THE TRIAL OF ABRAHAM.

GENESIS XXII. 2.---*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.*

This is the most extraordinary command, which we find in scripture. In order to set it in the most intelligible and instructive light, I shall make the following inquiries.

I. Let us inquire, whether God had a right to give this command to Abraham. The enemies of divine revelation allege this command, as an unanswerable objection against the inspiration of the Mosaic history. They challenge all the divines in the world, to reconcile this command with the law of nature written in every human heart. They say it is a plain violation of that rule of right, which is founded in the nature of things, for any man to imbrue his hands in the blood of his child. They say, if such an action be not wrong, it is impossible to prove any action to be so; for it is nothing less than murder, which is repugnant to every dictate of justice, benevolence, and humanity. But however plausible these objections against the divine command may appear, at first view; they are entirely groundless. For,

In the first place, God did not command Abraham to murder Isaac, or take away his life from malice

prepense. He required him only to offer him a burnt sacrifice, and though this implied the taking away of life ; yet it did not imply any thing of the nature of murder. God required Abraham to take his son, his only son, whom he loved, and in the exercise of love to him, to offer him a burnt sacrifice. This was essentially different from requiring him to slay his son, as Cain slew is brother Abel, from malice prepense. It is impossible to see, that there was any thing morally evil, or in its own nature wrong, in the divine command to Abraham. God required nothing of Abraham, but what he could do in the exercise of that love, which is the fulfilling of the law. It was no more intrinsically wrong for God to require Abraham to sacrifice his son in the exercise of pure benevolence, than it was to require him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's family, and sojourn in a strange land. None can object to this command, as being wrong in the nature of things, without first perverting the plain and obvious meaning of it. According to both the letter and spirit of it, it was entirely consistent with the moral rectitude of the Deity, to require Abraham to sacrifice his son.

In the next place, it must be allowed, that God himself had an original and independent right to take away that life from Isaac, which he had of his mere sovereignty given him. It is a divine and self-evident truth, that he has a right to do what he will with his own creatures. And this right God not only claims, but constantly exercises, in respect to the lives of men. He taketh away, and who can hinder him ? And he takes away when, and where, and by whom he pleases. He sometimes takes away with a stroke of

of his own hand, and sometimes by the stroke of the assassin, and murderer, and the executioners of justice. He commanded Samuel to hew Agag in pieces before the Lord. His own right to take away the life of man, gives him full right to command whom he pleases to take away the life of another. He had, therefore, an absolute right to command Abraham to take away his son's life. And his command to take away his son's life, no more required him to murder Isaac, than his command to Saul to slay Agag, required him to murder that captivated king.

Furthermore, God has a right to require men to do that at one time, which he has forbidden them to do at another. Though he had forbidden men to offer human sacrifices in general; yet he had a right to require Abraham, in particular to offer up Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. And after he had required him to sacrifice Isaac, he had a right to forbid him to do it, as he actually did. Though God forbid Balaam at first to comply with the request of Balak, and go with the messengers, whom he sent to him; yet afterwards he told Balaam to go with them. God has a right to countermand his own orders. As there was nothing morally evil, in God's commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son; so there was no inconsistency in his commanding him to do it, notwithstanding his general prohibition to mankind to offer human sacrifices. If we only view the command in the text, in its true and obvious import, we cannot discover any thing in it contrary to the light of nature, or the moral character of God; and consequently, must be convinced, that he had an absolute right to give such a command to Abraham. Let us now inquire,

II. Whether Abraham could know, that this command came from God. Those who deny, that God could consistently give such a command to him, deny that he could rationally know and believe, that he actually gave him such a command. This they say was so different from, if not contrary to all other commands of God, and so singular, extraordinary, and unaccountable, that he could not have so good reasons to believe, as to disbelieve, that it came from God. Now, it must be granted by all, that if Abraham did sacrifice Isaac, or offer him upon the altar, that he really thought God did require him to do it, and if he did really think so, it must have been owing either to his own heated imagination, or to the delusion of some evil spirit, or else to some real evidence of God's requiring him to sacrifice his son.

But it is evident, that it could not be owing to his own heated imagination; because there was nothing in nature to lead him to form such an imagination.--- The command was contrary to every thing that God had before required of him; it was contrary to what God had revealed in respect to human sacrifices; and it was contrary to all the natural instincts, inclinations, and feelings of the human heart. Though men are apt to imagine things, which are agreeable to their natural and selfish inclinations; yet they are never apt to imagine things, which are totally contrary to all these natural feelings. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that Abraham's imagination would lead him to think, that God did require him to sacrifice his only beloved son, if he did not actually require it. It is especially absurd to suppose this of Abraham, who in no other part of his conduct ever discovered a wild or enthusiastic

imagination, but exhibited a mind of superior strength penetration, and discernment. But supposing that he was actually under the influence of an heated imagination, why did he stop short of his purpose ? why did he not execute his original designs, and take away the life of his son ? He had had three days to reflect upon the extraordinary action. He had prepared the wood, laid it upon the altar, bound his son, and lifted his hand to give the fatal stroke. Can it be supposed, that imagination should carry him so far and then vanish in a moment ? Certainly his conduct cannot be accounted for upon the supposition of imagination.

Nor is there any better reason to think that he was under the delusion of some evil spirit. We can by no means suppose that God would suffer such an excellent man as Abraham to be deluded in such an extraordinary case, by the great deceiver ; nor that satan would be disposed to tempt Abraham to do what he really thought would be for the glory of God.--- Nor can we suppose, if satan, viewed it as a criminal action, he would have restrained him from committing the crime. But if Abraham was not led to think that God required him to sacrifice his son, by a wild imagination, nor by the delusion of an evil spirit ; then we are constrained to conclude, that he had clear and conclusive evidence of the command's coming from God.

If God did speak to Abraham and command him to sacrifice his son, he could undoubtedly make him know, that it was he who spake to him. God is able to speak in a manner peculiar to himself, and to distinguish his voice from the voice of any created being.--- To deny that God could make Abraham know that he spake to him, would be to deny the possibility of divine

revelation, and that God is as able to speak to his creatures, as they are to speak to one another, in an intelligible manner. And if he did speak to Abraham, and require him to sacrifice his son, he would certainly speak in a manner, that Abraham could and would understand. Besides, Abraham was under peculiar advantages to know the voice of God, who had frequently appeared to him, and conversed with him before.--- If this had been the first time that God had spoken to him, he might not have known his voice. Samuel did not know the voice of God the first time he spake to him. But Abraham was an old prophet. We have an account of God's speaking to him no less than six times before this. He called him from Haran to go to Canaan. He twice renewed covenant with him.--- He promised to give him Isaac before he was born.--- He conversed with him concerning Ishmael. And could he not know the voice of God in this instance, as well as in all the other instances which have been mentioned? He had no doubt, whether the command came from God or not; for it is said, "he rose up early in in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up and went unto the place which God had told him."

This leads us to inquire,

III. Why God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. It seems to be strange, that God should require any man to sacrifice his child, and still more strange, that God should require Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, whom he had given him in covenant love, and in the same covenant had promised to bestow upon him and upon his posterity great and distinguishing

blessings. Though God knew, that the command must tenderly and painfully affect the heart of Abraham; yet it does not appear, that he gave it as a mark of his displeasure, or as a punishment for any deviation from duty. And though God gave no reason to Abraham, why he required him to sacrifice his son; yet we must suppose, he had some good reason for laying such a peculiar command upon him. It is evident, that Abraham's offering Isaac upon the altar was a lively type or representation of God's offering Christ a sacrifice for the sins of the world. There was a great resemblance between Isaac and Christ. Isaac's birth was miraculous; and so was Christ's. Isaac was a beloved son; and so was Christ. Isaac was about thirty-three years old, when he was offered upon the altar, and so was Christ when he was made a sacrifice for sin. Isaac carried the wood for sacrifice; and so did Christ carry his cross. Isaac was bound upon the altar; and so was Christ fastened to the cross.

Isaac voluntarily offered up himself; and so did Christ. It is very probable, that Abraham viewed Isaac as a type of Christ, for we read, that, he saw Christ's day and rejoiced. And when is it more likely that he saw Christ's day, than when he offered Isaac? And this seems to be confirmed, by the promise, which immediately followed, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. But whether one design God had in view in commanding Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, was to make him a type of Christ, or not; we are assured, that he had another very important design in view. And what that design was, we are told in the verse before the text. "And it came

to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son," &c. By tempting here, we are to understand the same as trying or proving. God meant by the command in the text, to try or prove whether Abraham loved him sincerely and supremely. Such a command to sacrifice his son, was directly calculated to draw forth the real feelings of Abraham's heart towards God, and to try, and prove, and infallibly determine whether he loved God more than his son, or any other object upon the face of the earth. This was trying the sincerity of Abraham, just as he allowed satan to try the sincerity of Job. This trial of Abraham's affection, therefore, appears to have been the principal, if not the only end God had in view, in commanding Abraham to offer his son a burnt offering on the altar. It only remains to inquire,

IV. Whether this command to Abraham answered the end, which God proposed in giving it. And we find, that Abraham did actually and punctually obey both the letter and spirit of the command, by which he gave an infallible evidence, that he loved God sincerely and supremely. He rose up early in the morning, and set out upon his journey, which he continued unto the third day, when he arrived at the place, which God had told him of. There he built an altar, and laid wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood, and stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But at that moment, "the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham! And he said, here am I. And he said, lay not thine hand up-

on the lad, neither do any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time. And said, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Now, we must be fully convinced, that by this act of obedience, Abraham gave an infallible evidence of his sincere and supreme love to God, if we consider,

1. That he obeyed in contrariety to all the natural feelings and affections of the human heart. In many cases, natural affections and selfish motives may induce mankind to pay an external obedience to the divine commands; but in this case, we can see no room for the operation of these sinister motives. The command itself was directly calculated to awaken every natural passion and selfish feeling in opposition to obedience. As soon as Abraham heard the dread command, what a crowd of difficulties must have started up in his mind, and forbidden him to obey? What a conflict must he have had between love to God, and love to himself and his son? Every circumstance of the action, which he was required to do, was extremely self-denying and painful. To have sacrificed any other man's son would have been a hard task. To have sacrificed Ishmael or any other of his children, would have been a harder task. To have sacrificed

Isaac, whom he most tenderly loved, and who was the object of his highest hopes, according to the promises of God, would have been far more distressing, if he had been allowed to do it, at home, surrounded by his family and friends. But he was commanded to go to a distant, unknown, dreary wilderness, and there offer up the son of his love and highest hopes, a burnt offering. It is hardly possible to conceive, that his trial could have been carried to any higher degree. But this trial he cheerfully and patiently endured. Ye have heard of the patience of Job ; but was it equal to the patience and submission of Abraham ? The evidence of the sincerity and supremacy of his love to God, rises in proportion to the number and magnitude of the difficulties and obstacles, which stood in the way of his obedience.

2. The cheerfulness and promptitude, with which he obeyed the divine command, increase the evidence of the sincerity and supremacy of his love to God. Good men have often shown reluctance to obeying self-denying commands. Moses and Aaron were reluctant to bear the divine messages to Pharoah, and begged to be excused. Jonah dreaded to go to Nineveh and denounce the judgments of God against that city, and actually disobeyed the divine commands. But we have no account, that Abraham stood a moment hesitating whether he should obey the hard injunction laid upon him, or so much as pleading to be excused from performing the appalling and self-denying act of sacrificing his son. Such promptitude and alacrity in obedience, eminently displayed the purity, strength, and ardor of his love to God. His supreme love to God seemed to banish every selfish affection from his heart

which rendered the trial an infallible evidence of his sincerity. If he had harbored any selfish feelings at that time, they would most certainly have manifested themselves by reluctance, murmuring, or complaint. It must be further observed,

3. That his obedience to the command to sacrifice his son, was obedient to the mere will of God, which renders it in the highest possible degree evidential of his real and supreme love to him. God assigned no reason for his command, and he could see no reason for it, but many plain and powerful reasons against it. There was nothing to induce him to obey, but a full conviction, that the command came from God, was expressive of his pleasure, and clothed with his authority.--- Some of the divine commands carry their own reasons with them why they should be obeyed. And in other cases, he condescends to give reasons why his commands should be obeyed ; and such reasons serve to excite a prompt and cheerful obedience. But in the command given to Abraham, God gave no reasons why he should obey it, but simply his sovereign will.--- And to this will, Abraham paid the most prompt and cheerful obedience, which was the highest possible evidence that he could give, that his will, like Christ's, was swallowed up in the divine will. This was carrying his obedience to the highest pitch, and laid a just foundation for God to transmit his character to all future generations, under the noblest appellation, the *friend of God*. Thus God constantly accomplished his design in his command to Abraham.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from Abraham's ready obedience to the command in the text, that those who are willing to

obey God, can very easily understand the real meaning of his commands. God's command to Abraham was a very singular and self-denying command, but he found no difficulty in understanding its plain, but important meaning. His willingness to obey God in the most self-denying manner, made him willing to understand his command in the most self-denying sense. He knew, that God had a right to require him to deny himself in respect to any thing and every thing that he had given him, and therefore might, if he saw good reason for it, require him to sacrifice any one of his children, and even Isaac his beloved child. Accordingly he felt no disposition to stand and hesitate, whether the command came from God; or whether it was contrary to the nature of things; or whether it was inconsistent with other commands he had given him; or whether it was inconsistent with the promises he had made to him; or whether it was kind in him to require such an extraordinary act of self-denial. He knew the plain meaning of the words of the command, and was willing to obey it in the most self-denying sense. This willingness to obey, was the cause of his willingness to understand it in its proper meaning. And this is the case of those, who are willing to obey God, that they are equally willing to understand his commands in his word, which require the greatest self-denial. But those, who have not the love of God in them, find great difficulty in understanding the most self-denying duties and doctrines of the gospel. They find great difficulty in understanding the doctrine of total selfishness; the doctrine of disinterested love; the doctrine of unconditional submission; the doctrine of renouncing the world; the doctrine of divine sovereignty; the doc-

trine of vindictive justice ; and the doctrine of endless punishment for impenitence and unbelief. And those, who undertake to explain and preach the word of God, find great difficulty, in explaining such texts as teach such self-denying doctrines. And where will you find an expositor, who does not labour to soften and explain away the self-denying duties and doctrines contained in the bible ? This difficulty of understanding the doctrines and duties of divine revelation, principally arises from an unwillingness to believe and do what God requires. This was the cause, why sinners could not understand what Christ taught them. And to this cause he ascribes it. "Why do ye not understand my speech ? even because ye cannot hear my word." To this cause it is owing that so many complain, that they cannot understand those who preach the self-denying duties and doctrines in their plain and full meaning. They are unwilling to do what God requires.

2. Did Abraham exhibit the highest evidence of his sincere and supreme love to God, by obedience to his command ? Hence we learn, that this is the only way for all good men to exhibit the highest evidence of their sincere and supreme love to God. Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence, that creatures can exhibit of their sincere and supreme love to him. The angels in heaven never have exhibited, and never can exhibit any higher evidence of their pure, sincere love to God, than their cordial and cheerful obedience to his will. When God meant, that Abraham should exhibit the highest evidence of his sincere love to him, he proposed a certain act of obedience ; and by performing that act, he exhibited the highest evidence of his supreme love to his maker. God says to him,

"Now I know that thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Our Savior made obedience to him, the infallible test and highest evidence of true love to him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." It is by obedience, that good men exhibit the highest evidence to the world, that they love God. Though Abraham professed to love God; yet he never exhibited so high an evidence of it, as when in obedience to him, he offered up his son. And though christians may have the love of God in their hearts, yet they cannot exhibit evidence of it, without obedience to the divine commands. And it is by obedience, that christians exhibit the highest evidence to themselves, that their love to God is sincere and supreme. Abraham exhibited higher evidence to himself, that he loved God supremely, by offering up his son, than he ever did before. Men often think, that they are willing to do that beforehand, which they find themselves unwilling to do, when they come to the trial. Most, who make a profession of religion, probably think, that they shall be willing to do all that they engage to do; but how often do they find, that their resolutions and hearts fail them? So it is especially with young converts. They imagine, that they shall always be willing to obey every divine command and perform every self-denying duty. But it is only by actual obedience, that they find the nature and strength of their love to God.

3. It appears from the obedience of Abraham to the divine command, that all true obedience to God, flows from pure disinterested love to him. God has set his seal upon Abraham's obedience, as being gen-

uine and acceptable to him. But it abundantly appears from what has been said, that his obedience flowed from pure disinterested love. He obeyed the mere will of God, without the least regard to his own interest, but in apparent opposition to it. His own apparent interests all plead for disobedience. But he gave up the objects which lay the nearest to his heart. He gave up his son whom he loved, and all the promises of good, which centered in him. He was willing, if God required it, not only to give up his son, but his posterity, though numerous as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore. We know no man, who had so much to give up as Abraham; but he gave all that he had, which is the utmost, that Christ or God ever required. Abraham's love was not only without interest, but contrary to interest, which justly denominates it disinterested. Moses felt, and expressed the same disinterested love, when he gave up all the treasures of Egypt, and cheerfully consented to suffer affliction with the people of God; and when he was willing to have his name blotted out of the book of life, if it might be the cause of saving his nation from ruin. Paul felt and expressed the same disinterested love, in wishing for the salvation of the Jews. Christ came not to do his own will, but the will of his Father, and displayed more disinterested love in dying on the cross, than Abraham did in giving up his son, or than Isaac did in giving up his life. Christ taught his followers to exercise no other, than disinterested love, not to love those only that love them, but even those, who hate them. And Paul declared, that he should have no reason to think, that he was a real christian, if he did not exercise that love or charity.

which seeketh not her own. According to the whole tenor of scripture, there can be no true obedience to the divine commands, which does not flow from disinterested love.

4. It appears from God's design in giving the command in the text, and from the effects of it; that christians have no reason to think it strange concerning the fiery trials, which they are called to endure. God has a good design in all their trials. He means to do that which they desire him to do. David prayed that God would try him. All christians desire, that God would try them, in order that they may know whether their love is selfish or benevolent, and how far it is selfish. By trials God means to give them an opportunity to know their hearts. And he has another end to answer by trying them; and that is, to give them an opportunity to manifest the reality, beauty and importance of true religion before the eyes of the world. Abraham's trial and obedience has exhibited and will continue to exhibit the nature, beauty, and importance of true religion through the whole world, and to the end of time. Christians by patiently and submissively suffering affliction, do great good in the world, and more good very often than they could do in days of prosperity.

5. This subject calls upon all, who hope they are pious, to examine themselves by the criterion God has given, by the obedience of Abraham. The question to be proposed and answered is, whether they do the works of Abraham. Christ told the Jews if they were the children of Abraham, they would do the works of Abraham. And his works flowed from disinterested love. You are not so much to inquire, whether you

labor six days in the week, as why you labor. You are not so much to inquire, whether you attend public worship one day in seven, as why you attend. You are not so much to inquire whether you do good to others, as why you do it. You are not so much to inquire whether you love God, as why you love him. You are to inquire into the nature of all your religious affections. And this you may very easily determine by the examples of real piety recorded for your instruction in the word of God. If your religious affections do not lead you to universal and disinterested obedience to the will of God, your faith and hope and love are false.

The supreme and final Judge has declared---"Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he, that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven."

SERMON X.

THE PRAYER OF MOSES.

EXODUS XXXII, 32.—*Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.*

About three months after the Israelites left Egypt, they came and encamped at the foot of Sinai. There God called Moses into the mount, to deliver to him the ten commandments, written with his own finger on two tables of stone. But when the people saw that Moses delayed to come from the mount, "they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." It is strange, that the people should make this request; and stranger still, that Aaron should comply with it. For they had seen the miracles, which God had wrought in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness of Sin and at Rephidim; and had heard the voice of God speaking to them out of the thick darkness, which covered mount Sinai. To forget and to forsake God so soon and run into the grossest idolatry, was extremely displeasing to him. He therefore said unto Moses, "Go, get thee down: for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way, which I commanded them; they have

made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These are thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people ; and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them and I will make of thee a great nation." This alluring motive of personal preferment, instead of awakening the least selfish feeling in the heart of Moses, only excited his tender, disinterested desire for the good of his sinful people, which he expressed with peculiar propriety and importunity. " And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand ? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth ? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land I have spoken of, will I give unto thy seed, and they shall inherit it forever." Thus Moses interceded with God to spare his people, before he came down from the mount. When he came down and drew near to the camp, he cast the tables out of his hands and dashed them to pieces. Then he destroyed the graven image and severely reproved Aaron for making it. On the morrow, he said to the people, " Ye have sinned a great sin ; and now I will go up unto the Lord ; per-

adventure I shall make atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out thy book, which thou hast written." In order to explain this difficult passage of scripture, it is proposed,

I. To inquire to what book Moses here refers;

II. To inquire what was the true import of his request;

III. To inquire whether it was a proper one.

I. We are to inquire to what book Moses refers in the text. He says to God, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written." Various opinions have been entertained concerning this book.--- But passing over the opinions of others, I would observe, that Moses could not mean the book of God's remembrance. The prophet Malachi speaks of such a book. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them, that feared the Lord and that thought on his name." This is a figurative expression to denote, that God has as perfect knowledge of all the past actions of his people, as they have of those things, which they write down, to assist their recollection. It would indeed have been a great act of self-denial, had Moses desired to be blotted out of God's remembrance and denied all tokens of his favor through life. But Moses must have known that there was not only a moral, but a natural impossibility of God's blotting his name out of the book of his remembrance God cannot cease to remember, any more than he can cease to exist. It was naturally

impossible for God to forget Moses or any of his great and glorious deeds in teaching and guiding his people. We must therefore look for some other book, which God had written, in order to find that to which Moses refers. And there is another book of God, often mentioned in scripture, which is called the book of life and contains the names of all, whom he designs to save from the wrath to come and admit to heaven. David alludes to this book in the sixty-ninth psalm, where he says, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living and not be written with the righteous. The same book of life is mentioned in the twelfth chapter of Daniel. "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince, which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Taking this whole passage together, there can be no doubt but the prophet meant, by "every one written in the book," every one written in the book of life. Our Savior evidently referred to the book of life, when he said to the seventy disciples, who rejoiced in the success of their ministry, "Notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, speaks of his fellow-laborers, "whose names are in the book of life." Christ says in the third chapter of Revelations, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will

not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." In the thirteenth chapter, speaking of the beast, that rose out of the sea, he says, "All, that dwell upon the earth, shall worship him; whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world." And in the twentieth chapter, the apostle John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works." In these passages God is represented as having written a book of life, in which he has inserted the names of all mankind, whom he has chosen, elected, or set apart for himself from the foundation of the world; and whom he will finally admit into his kingdom of glory. To this book of life Moses might properly refer in the text. And it plainly appears, that he did refer to this book, by the answer God gave to his request, in the words immediately following it. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." This was as much as to say, "Moses, I have indeed a book written as you suppose, which contains the names of those, whom I have chosen to life before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before me in love. Your name, therefore, I will not blot out of my book, but the names of those only, who have sinned and deserved to be blotted out." No person, perhaps, would have thought, that Moses referred to any other book than the book of life, had it not been to avoid the lite-

ral sense of his petition, which many are loth to believe and acknowledge. But it is safest and best to follow the general analogy of scripture, in explaining particular passages. And according to this rule of interpreting the text under consideration, we are warranted to say, that Moses meant to refer to the book of life. Let us now inquire,

II. What was the import of his request, when he said to God, "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Here are two things requested and both conditionally. Moses prays, if it were consistent with the will of God, that he would pardon the sin of his people in making the golden calf. "Now if thou wilt forgive their sin." He prayed for the exercise of pardoning mercy towards the people conditionally, because God had intimated, as though he intended to destroy them, by saying, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them." Moses had reason to fear, that God would, at all events, deny his pardoning mercy. And therefore to render his intercession more forcible and prevalent and to express his most ardent desire for their forgiveness, he prays again conditionally. "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written." This was implicitly saying, "O Lord, since thou hast proposed to spare me and destroy thy people. I pray that thou wouldst rather blot me out of the book of life, and spare them. If thy glory require, that either they or I must be destroyed, I pray thee spare them and destroy me. Their salvation is unspeakably more important than mine; and I am willing to give up my salvation, if it might be a means, or occasion of pre-

venting their final ruin. This seems to be the true import of Moses' conditional request, which directly met God's proposal to him. And no doubt God made such a proposal to him, for the very purpose of drawing out the ardent and benevolent feelings of the most benevolent heart, then in the world. God knew beforehand how Moses would feel and what he would say, if he proposed to spare him, and destroy his whole nation. He meant to exhibit the most striking contrast possible between the benevolent spirit of Moses, and the selfish spirit of his ungrateful and rebellious people.--- And the sincere, though conditional prayer of Moses, under the existing circumstances, did set the superlative beauty and excellence of disinterested love, in the fairest and strongest light. As God expressed his peculiar love to Moses conditionally, so Moses expressed his love to God conditionally. But as God's love was as sincere, as if it had not been conditionally expressed; so Moses' love was as sincere, as if it had been expressed unconditionally. Moses, therefore, expressed as true, real, sincere willingness to give up his eternal interests for the glory of God and the good of his nation, as if he had actually made the sacrifice, and God had actually destroyed him and saved his nation on his account. And such a willingness to give up all his own interests for the eternal happiness of his people, was the highest expression of pure, disinterested benevolence, that he, or any other man in his situation, could possibly feel and express. It now only remains to inquire,

III. Whether this petition of Moses, taken in the sense it has been explained, was a proper one. It must be universally believed, that it was a proper petition taken in the sense Moses really meant; but

many doubt whether it was proper taken in the sense just given to it. They seem to think, that it could not be proper for Moses, or for any other man, under any situation whatever, to be willing and even to pray that God would blot out his name from the the book of life and devote him to endless misery, either to save a nation, or even the whole universe. They insist that self-preservation is the first law of nature ; and that no considerations ought to make any person willing to give up all his interests forever, to prevent the misery, or promote the happiness of others. It is, therefore, a very serious and important inquiry, whether it could have been proper for Moses, for any reason whatever, to pray God to blot out his name from the book of life.--- But, perhaps, this petition in the most literal, obvious, and important sense, will appear to have been altogether proper and becoming Moses, if we impartially consider the following things. And,

1. It appears to have been perfectly agreeable to God. He did not rebuke him for a rash request ; but on the other hand, plainly intimated that he was highly pleased with his noble, disinterested desire. Instead of saying, I will blot out thy name from the book of life, in answer to your rash and sinful request, he says, " whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." This was virtually saying, that he would not blot out Moses from the book of life, for he had not sinned in making the graven image, nor in requesting to be destroyed in the room of those, who had deserved to be blotted out of the book of life. If God had not approved of his petition, he would undoubtedly have reproved him for it ; because it was either a very good, or a very bad petition, which ought to be highly

approved, or highly condemned. But no person in the world can discover any evil in such a pure, noble, benevolent desire. And since God did not condemn it, we may safely conclude, that it was highly acceptable in his sight.

2. It was perfectly agreeable to the dictates of reason and conscience, that Moses should have been willing to give up all his own personal interests, to promote the glory of God and the future and eternal good of his nation. He supposed the glory of God was greatly concerned to preserve his people from deserved destruction; and he plead this as the most powerful argument to move God to forgive and spare them. "And Moses besought the Lord his God and said, O Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and all the land I have spoken of, will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." Moses viewed the glory of God and the lasting good of Israel, as lying at stake; and rather than these great interests should be given up, by the ruin of the chosen people of God, he chose that his name and interests should be lost forever. And could he hesitate as a conscientious and pious man, when God proposed the alternative, to give up his own interests,

to preserve the lasting interests of a whole nation, and promote his own glory through the earth ; could he, I say, hesitate what to do ? Supposing, when God proposed to destroy Israel and make of him a great nation, he had said, I pray thee do as thou hast proposed, make of me a great nation, and blot out Israel from the book of life ; would such a request have appeared amiable, or virtuous, or agreeable to the pious character of Moses ? Or would it have appeared agreeable to the dictates of any other man's reason and conscience ? But was there not something extremely noble, virtuous and honorable in the reply Moses made to God's proposal ? " Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin : and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book thou hast written."

3. The petition of Moses was agreeable to the very law of love. God requires all men to love him with all the heart ; and their neighbors as themselves. That is, he requires all men to love him supremely and to love all their fellow creatures in proportion to their worth and importance in the scale of being. This law required Moses to feel and speak as he did, in the situation God had placed him and in the view of the proposal he had made to him. God conditionally proposed to destroy his nation and spare him. In this view of his own and of his people's situation, the law of love required him, conditionally, to desire, that God would spare his people and destroy him ; because the glory of God and the good of his people were unspeakably more valuable, than all his own personal good. Had he, therefore, preferred his own personal good to the glory of God and the good of his people, he would not have loved God supremely, nor his people accord-

ing to their worth and importance, which would have been a violation of the law of love. For in that case he would have loved himself more than the glory of God and the good of his people to all eternity. The inference is irresistible, that he ought to have desired God to glorify himself, and to promote the everlasting good of his people, though at the expense of all his own interest forever.

4. The request of Moses was perfectly agreeable to the spirit, which Christ uniformly expressed through the whole course of his life on earth. He always gave up a less good of his own, for a greater good of others. He endured all the labors, pains, and reproaches of life, obeying his Father's will, and doing good to men. At length he came to the trying hour, when he must either give up his own life, or the life of the world and the glory of God. At that time he made a conditional request to his Father and repeated it three times, saying "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."--- If one or the other must be given up, either his Father's glory and the salvation of sinners, or his own life, he desired to give up his own life; and did actually give it up. Now the prayer of Moses expressed the same spirit, that the prayer of Christ expressed. If Christ's prayer was proper conditionally, then the prayer of Moses was conditionally proper. They neither of them desired to suffer, simply considered; but both were willing to suffer for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners. There is, therefore, precisely the same reason to suppose, that the prayer of Moses was proper, as to suppose the prayer of Christ was proper. God placed them both in a trying situation, in which they were oblig-

ed to pray either selfishly, or benevolently; and they both prayed benevolently and properly. They both expressed the purest love to God and man; and their example is worthy of universal imitation. For the apostle John says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." I may add,

5. That the prayer of Moses was proper, because it was agreeable to the prayers and practice of other good men. Paul said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Yea, he did solemnly declare, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Moses did not express a greater willingness to be blotted out of the book of life, than Paul did, when he said he was willing to be accursed from Christ, to answer the same purpose, which Moses desired might be answered by his being blotted out of the book of life. Moses prayed as properly as Paul did; and they both prayed agreeably to the spirit of the primitive christians, who were willing to lay down their lives for the brethren. Paul says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the gentiles." In a word, the prayer of Moses appears to be proper, because it was agreeable to the character and law of God, to the character and conduct of Christ, to the character and conduct of the primitive christians, and to the nature of pure, disinterested love, which always prefers the glory of God and the good of the universe, to all personal considerations. There is every kind of evidence

to believe, that the request of Moses in the text was perfectly proper and highly pleasing to God.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the prayer of Moses in the text was proper and acceptable to God; then true love to God and man is, strictly speaking, disinterested love. Moses expressed a love, which was not only without interest, but contrary to interest. He not only loved God more than himself, and his nation more than himself; but he loved both God and his nation in opposition to himself. He desired the glory of God and the good of his nation might be promoted, not only in contrariety to part of his own good, but in contrariety to all his own good. This was, strictly speaking, disinterested love. It was not merely supreme love, or universal love, or impartial love, but truly disinterested love. Many will allow, that true love is impartial, universal, and supreme, while they strenuously deny that it is properly disinterested. Some criticise upon the Greek preposition *dis*, and say it properly signifies twice, or double, rather than contrariety. This is a groundless assertion. No English writers use it in this sense, but always use it to signify contrariety; as in these words disease, disorder, displeasure, disunion, discord, disobedience; and in a multitude of other words compounded of the preposition *dis*. No other adjective can fully express the peculiar nature of pure, virtuous, holy love to God, or man; and distinguish it essentially from selfishness. If a selfish man should believe, that God loved him and intended to employ all his perfections and all his creatures and works to promote his private separate happiness in time and eterni-

ty, he might exercise a species of supreme, impartial and universal love. He certainly might exercise universal love ; that is, love to God and to all his creatures. He might exercise supreme love ; that is, love God more than all his creatures, except himself. And he might exercise impartial love ; that is, love God and all his creatures in proportion to their worth and importance to promote his happiness. This is not a mere visionary supposition. There is reason to fear, that there are many, who imagine they love God supremely, and all his creatures impartially, while they are under the reigning power of a carnal mind or selfish heart. Those, who love God, merely because they suppose he loves them, naturally extend their selfish love to God and all his creatures ; for while they view God and all his creatures unitedly promoting their future and everlasting good, it is as natural to love them, as to love themselves. There is a sense, in which self-love may be supreme, universal and impartial ; but there is no sense, in which it is disinterested. It is this disinterestedness of holy love, that most properly and fully distinguishes it from unholy, sinful love. It is just as necessary and important to maintain, that true love to God and man is disinterested, as to maintain the distinction between virtue and vice, sin and holiness, saints and sinners. For take away the distinction between selfishness and disinterested benevolence ; and it is impossible to prove that there is any such thing as either moral good, or evil, or any essential difference between the best and worst of men.

2. If the conditional prayer of Moses was proper ; then it is impossible to carry the duty of disinterested

benevolence too far. It is often supposed, by those who profess to believe, that there is such a thing as disinterested benevolence required in the gospel, it may be carried too far. Though they allow, that one man ought to love another as himself; yet they deny that he ought to love him more than himself. Though they allow, that men ought to love God supremely; yet they deny, that they ought to love him more than all their temporal and eternal interests. And they think, that those, who carry the duty of benevolence, or self-denial to such an extensive and high degree, carry it to an unreasonable and unscriptural height. They can bear to be told, that man ought to give up his temporal interest, when it becomes absolutely necessary, in order to secure his eternal interest, or to secure the eternal interests of others; but they cannot believe, that a man ought to give up his eternal interests for the honor of God and the salvation of others. They do not presume to call in question the duty of the primitive christians in forsaking fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands for the sake of Christ and the salvation of their own souls. But they think, that Paul and Moses carried disinterested benevolence too far, when they professed to be willing to give up their own eternal interests for the glory of God and the salvation of his people. They allow a man may give up any or all his temporal interests, if it be necessary, in order to secure his future and eternal interests. But they strenuously deny, that it can ever be his duty to give up all his eternal interests for the sake of the glory of God and the good of the universe. If such persons would only consider the nature and tendency of disinterested benevolence, they would

clearly see that it cannot be carried too far. For it is the very nature of it to give up a less good of our own for the greater apparent good of others. The same disinterested benevolence, which will dispose a man to give up a small good of his own for a greater good of another, will dispose him to give up a greater good of his own, for a still greater good of another. The same disinterested benevolence, which disposes a man to give up one part of his own interest to promote the interests of others, will dispose him to give up another part of his interests to promote the interests of others.--- And the same disinterested benevolence, which disposes a man to give up any part of his own interests for the good of others, will dispose him to give up all his interests for the greater interests of others. There may be the same reason for a man's giving up all he has for the good of others, as for giving up any thing he has for the good of others. It is the same thing according to the doctrine of benevolence and the doctrine of Christ, to give up all a man has for the good of others, as to give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple.--- The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of disinterested benevolence, which knows no bounds and admits of no limitations of self-denial, in promoting the glory of God and good of others. This is agreeable to Christ's express declaration to his followers. "Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath he cannot be my disciple."

3. If the prayer of Moses was proper, then none ought to be willing to be lost only conditionally. He did not unconditionally desire, that God would blot him out of the book of life and banish him from his blissful presence forever. He had seen God face to

face and conversed with him, as a man converses with his friend. He had seen the moral excellence and glory of God, and sincerely desired to see more and more of it; for he humbly said to him, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory." He esteemed the glory of God and the everlasting enjoyment of him infinitely more desirable and valuable than all the treasures of Egypt, or than all the treasures of the world. He did not desire to be blotted out of the book of life, simply considered; but dreaded it above all other evils, that could fall upon him. His desire was altogether conditional. It was only, if need be, that he was willing to be cast away forever. If it was necessary, that he should perish, to prevent the utter destruction of his nation, he was willing to sacrifice all his hopes and happiness, for the glory of God and their eternal good. Just so, no person ought to be willing to be cast off forever, simply considered; but only conditionally, if the glory of God and the good of the universe require it. But you may now ask, what has often been asked, what right has any person to make the supposition, that the glory of God and the good of the universe may require, that he should finally perish? The answer is plain and easy to be understood. It is because the glory of God and the good of the universe have required, that Pharoah, Judas, and Balaam should be destroyed. And we know, that the glory of God and the good of the universe will require that all the non-elect should be destroyed. No sinner, therefore, before he is regenerated knows that it is consistent with the glory of God and the good of the universe, that he should be saved; and of course he has a right to make the supposition, that the glory of God and the good of the universe may re-

quire his destruction, as well as that of any other sinner. And in this state of uncertainty, he is constrained to make the supposition, that he may be finally cast off; and when he makes the supposition, he cannot help being willing, or unwilling that God should cast him off. I scruple not to say, that every sinner under genuine conviction is brought to this trial, whether he is willing or unwilling, that God should cast him off; and that no such sinner is willing to be cast off before he is made willing by the renovation of his heart.--- The doubting christian is brought to the same trial, as the convinced sinner. For he does not know that he is a real christian, or that he ever shall be. In this doubting situation, he is constrained to suppose, that he may be lost. He must then be either willing, or unwilling to be cast off. If he be unwilling, his unwillingness is an evidence against him; and he can find no evidence in his favor, until he feels willing that God should dispose of him as shall be most for his glory.--- Nothing short of this can give him good ground of hope and comfort. I know of no truth of more practical importance than this, that every person, in order to be saved, must be conditionally willing, that God should dispose of him, for time and eternity, as shall be most for his glory and the good of the universe.

4. If the prayer of Moses was proper and sincere; then those, who possess his spirit, are the best friends of sinners. The sinners in Israel had no better friend than Moses. He was the most desirous of their temporal and eternal good; and was willing to do the most to promote it. He was continually praying for them, which prevented them from suffering many evils, to which they were greatly exposed; and drew down

many great and distinguishing blessings upon them.--- And had it been necessary, he was ready to give up all his own interests, to promote their future and eternal interests. And what more could he desire, or do for them. Though christians in general have not so large a portion of pure, impartial, disinterested, and universal benevolence as Moses had ; yet they all have some portion of it, which disposes them to desire and promote the temporal and eternal good of sinners.--- Though they have no disposition to take them out of the hands of God, yet it is their hearts desire and prayer to him, that they may be saved. They not only pray for them, but they instruct them, advise them and admonish them, in regard to their duties and dangers. Nor do they neglect to exercise their proper power and influence, to restrain them from all the paths of the destroyer. But, alas ! they too often misunderstand, misrepresent and abuse such benevolent conduct. Nevertheless, christians, like Moses and Samuel, do not cease to pray for them, but continue to say to God, as the leper said to Christ, " If thou wilt, thou canst make them clean." They believe that they are within the reach of divine power and mercy and that God may be waiting to be gracious to them which animates them to persevere in their benevolent desires and exertions ; though they know, if the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom require their destruction, the intercessions of Noah, Job and Daniel cannot prevent it.

5. If the prayer of Moses was proper and sincere, then none can pray sincerely for any good, without being willing to do whatever is necessary on their part, to obtain it. They cannot pray for the poor sincerely, without being willing to do whatever is necessary and

proper on their part, to assist, support and comfort them. They cannot sincerely say to the naked and destitute, "be ye warmed, and be ye filled, while they are not willing to give them those things, which are needful to the body. They cannot pray sincerely for the spiritual good of a person, or of a people, or of the world, without being willing to do all that is proper on their part to promote and secure the spiritual blessings prayed for. Moses appears to have been sincere in his intercessions for his people, because he was willing to do and suffer any thing, which he believed to be proper and necessary to promote and secure their temporal and eternal good. His prayers and faith and works were consistent and sincere ; and of vast benefit to the people of God. If christians would follow the example of Moses and act as consistently with their intercession for others, they would avail much in drawing down the blessings of providence and grace upon individuals, societies and all the nations of the earth. All the blessings, which God has still to bestow upon mankind, he means to bestow in answer to the effectual, fervent, sincere prayers of his people. He has set them apart for himself and they have devoted themselves to him. They have a serious and important part to act on the stage of life and their own interests and the interests of all mankind are lodged in their hands ; and it highly behoves them to be faithful to God, to themselves, and to the world.

6. If the conditional prayer of Moses was proper and acceptable to God ; then the prayers of the people of God are always heard and answered. They always pray as Moses did, conditionally. They pray for

nothing unconditionally and unsubmissively. They never know what it is best for God to grant, or to deny. Moses did not know whether it was best for God to forgive his people, though he ardently desired it; and therefore he prayed conditionally and submissively for their forgiveness. This was acceptable to God and he granted his request; and if he had refused to forgive them, still he would have granted his request; just as he granted Christ's request, though he denied what he prayed for in particular. God knows what is best for a person, or a people, better than they do; and this christians believe to be true; and accordingly refer it to God to grant, or deny the particular favors they plead for; and he always either grants what they ask, or gives them something better, so that their petitions are always answered. He never says to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." To pray in faith is not to pray in a certain belief of God's granting what is prayed for; but to pray in faith is to pray in a belief that he will do what is wisest and best to be done and in cordial submission to the divine disposal. This is all the assurance, that christians ought to desire to have, to encourage their intercession for others. It is all that Moses had to encourage him to pray for himself and others. And they would have reason to be afraid to pray, if they knew beforehand, that God would certainly give them the very things they prayed for. For they might desire and pray for things, that would prove a curse to them and others, instead of a blessing. It is their wisdom, as well as duty, always to pray conditionally and submissively; for then they may be assured their prayers will be answered benevolently and graciously.

7. If the conditional prayer of Moses was proper and acceptable to God; then the prayers of sinners are always sinful and unacceptable to God. For they never pray conditionally, but unconditionally. They are not willing to be denied on account of God's glory. It does not satisfy them to be told, that God cannot grant their requests consistently with his own glory and the good of the universe. For his glory and the good of the universe do not appear so important as their own good; and they will not submit to be denied, for such reasons. But if they will only ask for mercy, conditionally and submissively, they shall certainly find mercy.

SERMON XI.

SIN.

1. JOHN, III. 4.—*For sin is a transgression of the law.*

The whole verse is this: "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth the law: for sin is a transgression of the law."

Taking the text as an independent declaration, I shall,

I. Consider what law is here meant;

II. Consider what this law requires; And,

III. Consider what this law forbids.

I. Let us consider what law the apostle mentions in the text. God has given a great many laws to mankind at different times. He gave a positive law to Adam, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He gave him another positive law, requiring him to keep the Sabbath. He gave him another positive law, requiring him to labor and cultivate the earth. He gave him another positive law, requiring him to offer vicarious sacrifices to make atonement for sin. He gave a positive law to Noah, forbidding him to commit murder. Afterwards he gave a code of laws to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses. This code of laws comprised the moral law, the ceremonial law and the civil law. The question now is, which of all these divine laws does the apostle mean in the text? There is no reason to think, that he means any law given to Adam, or any law given to

Noah, or any law given by Moses, except the moral law, which is founded in the reason of things and is of perpetual obligation. This he calls the law, in distinction from all positive laws and particular precepts.--- By the law, therefore, he means the first supreme and universal law of God's moral kingdom, which is binding upon all rational and accountable creatures. The apostle John means the same law that the apostle Paul meant, when he said, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The law, by which both Jews and gentiles stood condemned, could not be either the ceremonial, or civil law given by Moses; for the gentiles were never under either of those laws; consequently it must mean the moral law, in distinction from all other laws given under either the Mosaic, or christian dispensation. Any mere positive law, which God has given to any of his creatures, he has a right to abolish, or repeal, when a change of circumstances requires it; but the moral law he has no right to abolish, or repeal, under any change of circumstances, because it is founded in the immutable relation, which he bears to his creatures and they bear to him. He must cease to be their creator and they to be his creatures, before the obligation of the moral law can cease to bind them. This appears to be true from plain, acknowledged facts. All the civil and ceremonial laws given by Moses have actually been superceded and abolished by the christian dispensation. This the apostle John knew; and therefore by the law in the text, he could mean no other divine law, but the moral law, which is as binding under the

christian dispensation as ever it was under the Mosaic. I now proceed,

II. To consider what this moral law, which is binding upon all mankind, requires. It certainly requires something, that is reasonable, because it is founded in reason; and it will appear to require what is reasonable, according to an infallible exposition of it; by an infallible judge. Our Savior perfectly understood the true import and perpetual obligation of the law, and came to fulfil and magnify it. He said to his hearers in his sermon on the mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The Sadducees, who were enemies to the divine law, came to him on a certain occasion. "Then one of them, who was a lawyer, or Jewish teacher, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." According to this divine exposition of the divine law, it requires all men to love God and one another; and implies, that all, who do love God and their fellow-men perfectly, obey the law. And the apostle Paul gives the same exposition of the law. He says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this thou shalt not com-

mit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." We have now found, that the law requires love; and that love is the fulfilling of the law, or all that the law requires. But in order to determine the true meaning and import of the law, we must still further inquire what kind of love the law requires. There are two kinds of love; selfish love and benevolent love. Selfish love is interested love; but true benevolent love is disinterested love. It is most reasonable to suppose, that our Savior means by love to God, supreme love to him; and by love to man, disinterested love to him. For no man can love God supremely from selfishness, nor his neighbor as himself from selfishness. Besides, we cannot suppose, that Christ meant to say, that the divine law requires selfish love to God and man; for he had before expressly condemned all selfish love to God and man. He said in his sermon on the mount, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them, who love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do

not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." Here it is evident, that the love, which God requires in his law, is the same kind of love, that he feels and expresses towards all mankind, which is a love of disinterested benevolence towards his enemies, as well as his friends. Selfishness disposes men to hate and not to love their enemies. And if God were not possessed of pure, disinterested benevolence, he would not love those who hate him. No man's conscience approves of any love in himself, or in others, but what is disinterested. All holy, virtuous love is disinterested, whether it be holy benevolence, or holy complaisance. Holy benevolence embraces all mankind, whether they are holy, or unholy; but holy complaisance embraces none but those, who appear to be holy. There are but two things really valuable and desirable in their own nature. One is happiness and the other is holiness. Happiness is valuable and desirable in its own nature, or for what it is in itself. And holiness is valuable and desirable in its own nature, or for what it is in itself. The moral law, therefore, which is founded in the nature of things, requires men to love and seek holiness and happiness for themselves and others. It requires them to love and seek the holiness and blessedness of God supremely; because he is supremely great and good. And it requires men to love and seek one anothers' holiness and happiness as their own. And when they exercise such disinterested love to God and man, they fulfil the law, or do all that the law requires them to do. For while they feel disinterested love to God and man, they will spontaneously perform all those external actions, which are a proper

expression of love to God and man. That love to God, which the divine law requires, will dispose those, who possess it, to read his word, call upon his name, remember his sabbath, attend his ordinances and employ their time, their talents, their property and influence in his service. And that love, which the divine law requires, will dispose those, who possess it, to perform every external duty, that they owe to their fellow-men. The divine law, which requires true love to God and man, virtually and necessarily requires all those external actions, which are a proper expression of true love to God and man. For the law of God does not require any external actions, but such as naturally flow from love to God and man. Christ severely and pointedly condemned those, who performed external acts of religion, without love to God. "Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye pay tithe of mint and annise and cummin and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." God approves of no external conduct towards him, but what flows from pure disinterested love to him; and he approves of no external conduct towards men, but what flows from pure disinterested love to them. So that all, that the divine law requires, may be summarily comprehended in pure, disinterested love to God and man. Having ascertained what the divine law requires, it remains to consider,

III. What it forbids. Every law has both a precept and prohibition. It forbids whatever is directly contrary to what it requires; and requires whatever is directly contrary to what it forbids. The law, which requires men to remember the sabbath day and keep it holy, forbids whatever is directly contrary to remembering and keeping the sabbath properly. The law, which says, "Thou shalt not kill," requires men to preserve their own lives and the lives of others. After we have ascertained what any law forbids, it is pretty easy to ascertain what it requires; and after we have ascertained what any law requires, it is pretty easy to ascertain what it forbids. It must forbid what is directly contrary to what it requires. It appears from what has been said under the last head, that the divine law requires disinterested love to God and man; and from this we may justly conclude, that it forbids whatever is directly contrary to disinterested love to God and man. And what can be more directly contrary to disinterested love, than interested love? or what can be more directly contrary to disinterested benevolence, than selfishness; The divine law, therefore, necessarily forbids all internal selfishness and all external expressions of it. Selfishness and nothing but selfishness is a transgression of the law of love. For selfishness and nothing but selfishness is sin; and nothing but sin is a transgression of the law. As disinterested love is the fulfilling of the law; so interested love is a transgression of the law. Selfishness is the only thing, that the law forbids; and therefore the transgression of the law wholly consists in selfishness. This appears not only from the nature of the law and the nature of selfishness, but from the general represen-

tation of scripture. Paul says, "I had not known sin ---except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."--- He did not know what sin was, until he knew what was a transgression of the law; and he did not know what was a transgression of the law, until he knew that covetousness, which is selfishness, is a transgression of the law. As the law forbids selfishness, so selfishness must be a transgression of it. Again the apostle says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But why cannot the carnal mind be subject to the law of God? No other reason can be given for it, but that the carnal mind consists in selfishness; which is a solid reason why it cannot be subject to the law of God; for it is impossible, that selfishness should be obedience, or submission to the law that forbids it, as the divine law does. Again the apostle represents selfishness as the source of all sin and iniquity. "This know, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The love of self is here represented as the fruitful source of every species of disobedience to the divine law; and it must be so, because disobedience to it cannot spring from any other source. It must be here observed, that as the law requires no external actions but what flow from disinterested love; so the law forbids no external actions, but what flow from selfishness. As love therefore, is said to be the fulfilling of the law, so selfish-

ness may as properly be said to be the full and entire transgression of the law. It is just as certain, that the divine law forbids selfishness, as that it requires disinterested love ; and it is just as certain, that sin consists in selfishness, as that holiness consists in disinterested benevolence. And it must be universally allowed, that the divine law is an infallible standard of both holiness and sin.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the transgression of the divine law consists in positive selfishness ; then it does not consist in a mere want of conformity to it. The assembly of divines tell us, that "sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God." The mere want of any thing is nothing. The mere want of conformity to the divine law is nothing ; and nothing has no qualities, either good, or bad. There is a want of conformity to the divine law in all material objects : but no praise or blame can be ascribed to them on that account. Their want of conformity is no transgression of the law of God. There is a want of conformity to the divine law in all the lower creation ; but their want of conformity to it has no qualities and is neither morally right, or wrong. And a mere want of conformity to the divine law has no qualities ; and is neither sinful, nor holy. A mere want of conformity to the divine law is no transgression of it. It is not any thing that is directly contrary to the disinterested love, which the law requires. It is not any thing positive, but only negative. It is no more like selfishness, than benevolence. There is no more sin, in the want of holiness, than there is holiness in the want of sin. Nei-

ther holiness, nor sin can originate from a privative cause, which is really no cause at all. Whatever exists must have a positive cause of existence. If holiness exists, it must have a positive cause; and if sin exists, it must have a positive cause. And if sin consists in selfishness, it must have as positive a cause, as holiness, which consists in benevolence. Selfishness has as real and positive existence, as holiness; and requires as positive a cause of its existence as holiness. But it is universally allowed, that holiness must have a positive cause of its existence; and it is generally allowed, that God is the direct, immediate, and efficient cause of its existence. No reason, then, can be given why so many maintain, that sin consists in a mere want of conformity to the divine law, but a fear of allowing that it must have a cause; and that God must be that cause. To avoid the sentiment, that God is the cause of moral evil, they are driven to suppose, that moral evil has crept into the world without any cause. They suppose, that Adam's first sin consisted in a mere want of conformity to the law of God and had no positive cause. They compare all moral evil to cold, which they suppose is owing to the mere want of the warm influence of the sun and not to any positive cause. But what right they have to suppose, that cold is owing to a mere want of heat, more than that heat is owing to a mere want of cold, I know not; and I believe they cannot tell. There is not a truer, or plainer proposition in nature, than that every effect must have a cause. Sin is an effect as much as holiness; and must have a cause as much as holiness. And if we look into the bible, we shall find, that the inspired writers as often and as plainly speak of the cause of a bad heart, as

of a good heart ; of a hard heart, as of a soft heart ; and of sin, as of holiness. They represent holiness as consisting in pure, holy, disinterested love ; and sin as consisting in interested love, or selfishness. They represent God as producing holiness and producing sin. It is no more possible to conceive, that selfishness should get into the world, than that holiness should get into the world, without a divine agency. There is but one true and satisfactory answer to be given to the question, which has been agitated for ages, "*Whence came evil ?*" And that is, *it came from the great First Cause of all things.* This must certainly be true, if sin does not consist in a mere want of conformity to the law of God, but in a free voluntary exercise of that selfishness, which is the only possible transgression of it. But we are told, that all sins of omission consist in a mere want of conformity to the divine law. Though this appears a little plausible, it is easy to see, that there is no weight in it. I know, that there are many sins, which are called sins of omission ; and are always considered as criminal. But let us consider in what their criminality consists. It does not consist in a mere want of thinking, or the mere want of speaking, or in the mere want of acting. Idleness may be said to be a sin of omission. If a man, who is able to work, who needs to work, and who ought to work, neglects to work, he is guilty of idleness, which is a sin of omission. But in what does his sin consist ? It consists in his freely, voluntarily refusing to do what he knows he ought to do for his own good and the good of others ; and not in having no choice, no design, no intention about being idle. His refusing to obey the command to labor is really a positive act of disobedience

to, and transgression of the law of God, as an act of laboring on the sabbath. The priest and the levite, who passed by the poor man they saw wounded, and neglected to relieve him, were evidently guilty of a sin of omission. But did their sin consist in a mere want of conformity to, or in an actual transgression of the law of love? They were not destitute of perception, reason, conscience, or volition. They had positive exercises of heart, which were altogether selfish and directly contrary to that love to man, which the divine law required. They had as positive exercises of selfishness, as the good Samaritan had positive exercises of benevolence. They as positively disobeyed the divine law, as the Samaritan positively obeyed it. If any one will thoroughly and candidly examine the subject, he will find that all sin consists in a positive transgression of the divine law; and not in a mere want of conformity to it. Of course, he will see, that sin must have as positive a cause, as holiness. The opinion, that all moral evil is owing to a mere privative cause, and primarily consists in a mere want of conformity to the divine law, is not only very erroneous, but leads to many other great and dangerous errors.

2. If the divine law requires pure, disinterested love, and forbids selfishness, then every free, voluntary exercise of the heart is either an act of obedience, or disobedience to the law of God. There are no free, voluntary exercises of a moral agent, who is under law to God, that are indifferent, neither good, nor evil; or that are almost good and not quite, or almost evil and not quite. The divine law is the infallible standard of moral good and evil and condemns all free, voluntary exercises, which it does not require. Many imagine,

that there are a great many desires, designs, dispositions, inclinations, intentions, resolutions and wishes, which are almost good, but not quite ; and a great many, that are almost sinful, but not quite. And upon this ground, they suppose, that there are a great many persons, that are almost sinners, but not quite ; or almost christians, but not quite. And they have the same opinion of themselves. They imagine, that they sometimes almost obey the law, but not quite ; and sometimes disobey the law, but not quite. But there is no such thing as almost obeying, or almost disobeying the divine law. A sinner never approaches any nearer obeying the law at one time, than at another ; but always breaks it, by every imagination of the thought of his heart. And a christian always obeys, or disobeys the divine law. There are no *venial* sins, as papists imagine. They suppose mankind do a great many things, which are not wholly right nor wholly wrong and do not amount to real obedience, or disobedience to the divine law. These they call *venial* sins, or sins that are small and may be winked at or allowed. But the divine law knows no such things. It condemns whatever it does not require. Every free, voluntary exercise of the mind is either holy and benevolent, or sinful and selfish. Hence says our Savior, " He, that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he, that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." Every benevolent exercise is obedience to the law ; and every selfish affection is a transgression of the law. No voluntary exercise is partly benevolent and partly selfish. Nor is there the least resemblance between a benevolent and a selfish affection. There is, therefore, no possibility of partly obeying and part-

ly disobeying the divine law, by any free, voluntary exercises. The divine law is exceeding broad and reaches to all the exercises of the heart ; and either requires or forbids every exercise. As every sin is a transgression of the law, so the least sin is exceeding sinful. It is disobedience to the supreme authority of the supreme Being. And whoever realizes this, cannot think light of any sin ; or make a mock at sin.

3. If every selfish exercise be a transgression of the law, then those are under a deep deception, who imagine that they have no sin. There are some at this day, who maintain the sinless perfection of saints in this life. Some publicly profess to believe, that they have actually attained to a state of perfect freedom from sin, and are become perfectly sanctified. They not only believe, but teach this doctrine, by which they not only deceive themselves but others. For if they would only view themselves in the glass of the divine law, they would soon be convinced, that they fall far below that standard of perfection. If they would only consider, that every selfish affection is a transgression of the law, they would be far from thinking that they have no sin ; and are more holy than the most holy men whose characters are drawn by the infallible pen of divine inspiration. Solomon says that "there is not a just man on the earth, who doeth good and sinneth not." Job says, "If I justify myself my own mouth shall condemn me : if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." Paul says, "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me :" and he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" After this, he expressly declares that he fell far short of sinless perfection. "Not as

though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.---Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is contrary to the whole current of scripture, to suppose that any mere man, since the fall, ever did, or ever will attain to sinless perfection in this life; but yet a large denomination of christians publicly profess and maintain this unscriptural doctrine. Though all the Methodists do not pretend to have actually reached sinless perfection; yet they generally profess to believe and zealously inculcate this doctrine. But their opinion has no foundation in reason, or observation, or scripture; and originates in nothing but spiritual ignorance and self-deception. This Christ's most beloved disciple has told us. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and the truth is not in us." The same denomination of christians maintain, that the best of christians, even those, who have, as they supposed, attained to sinless perfection, may nevertheless finally fall away and eternally perish. This great error arises from a still greater and absolutely fundamental error, which they hold and strenuously propagate; that is, the denial of the doctrine of personal election to eternal life. They speak of the doctrine of election and reprobation in terms that are not fit to be used on any subject. But some may ask, why do you mention these errors? I answer, because the evidence of their falsehood and dangerous tendency

clearly appears from the subject I am considering; and because these errors are zealously propagated near us and all around us, and thousands and thousands in New-England and in the United States are imbibing them with great avidity, at the risk of their eternal interests. It becomes every minister and every church to contend earnestly for great and essential truths; and to guard themselves and to guard others against all false and dangerous errors in religion.

4. If every selfish exercise is a transgression of the law and every transgression of the law is sin; then every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. The least sin is an act of rebellion against God, the supreme Sovereign and Lawgiver of the universe. Though some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others; yet every sin is real rebellion against him and deserves the weight of his eternal wrath. One sin is as real a transgression of the law as another; and as justly deserves the divine displeasure. Accordingly we find that God has threatened in his law, to inflict everlasting punishment for every transgression and consequently, for the least transgression. For it is written, "the wages of sin is death; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." If what the law requires be right, then what it threatens is just. One reason, why so many are apt to think the penalty of the law is unjust, is because they do not think, that every selfish affection and action is a real sin, or transgression of the law; for it is essential to every law human, or divine, to threaten punishment to every transgressor of it. The law of God threatens death, eternal

death to every transgressor, because every transgression of the divine law renders every transgressor deserving to be punished forever. For his guilt will forever remain, and as long as his guilt remains, he continues to deserve to be punished. The divine law is the infallible measure of duty, of guilt and of punishment. The moral governor of moral agents is absolutely bound to treat them according to the holy and righteous law he has given them. And we know that the law, which God has given to men, is holy, just and good in its precept and penalty. It is, therefore, as certain that every transgressor of his law deserves eternal death, as that he has actually threatened to inflict that punishment for the least transgression.

5. If the law of God forbids all selfish and sinful affections upon pain of eternal death ; then mankind are all naturally in a very guilty and wretched condition.--- If their character and condition are to be measured by the divine law, then they are by nature in a state of perfect guilt and complete condemnation. They do nothing but what is a transgression of the divine law, which condemns them to eternal death, for every transgression. They have done nothing but sin every day since they were born, and consequently, have been continually treasuring unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath ; and nothing prevents God from executing the penalty of his holy law upon them, but his mere sovereign, unpromised mercy. Their feet stand on slippery places and may slide any moment that God sees fit to determine. This is the plain, simple truth, with respect to every sinner. And this plain, simple truth is more alarming and tremendous to an awakened sinner, than all the thunderings and lightnings,

which attended the giving of the law at mount Sinai. Those displays of the divine displeasure were transitory and momentary; but the sentence which the law passes upon every transgressor is a sentence of eternal death. But why do you attempt to alarm our fears by representing sin as a transgression of the law; and the law as threatening death for every transgression? We have often heard all this before; and are prepared to hear it again, without any painful fears and apprehensions. But perhaps you are mistaken, as thousands of others have been, who were as stout-hearted as you are now. I will mention one instance. It is that of Paul. He was a man of as much knowledge, as much courage and fortitude as you are. But he tells us, that he could not stand before the requirements and threatenings of the divine law. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy and the commandment holy, just and good." I think I see what you have often seen, poor guilty sinners bowed down, hopeless and helpless, in the utmost anguish and distress, crying, what must we do to be saved? And I think I see one and another of you, who are most stout-hearted, sinking down in dismay and despair. I ask you, what is the matter? You exclaim---We have sinned against God; we have transgressed his law; we deserve his curse; his dreadful wrath abides upon us; we cannot stand before him; we fall by our own sin and guilt into the endless torments of hell.

SERMON XII.

NATIVE DEPRAVITY.

Isaiah, xlviii. 8—*And wast called a transgressor from the womb.*

In order to see the propriety of this declaration, it is necessary to look into the context and see the method God takes to convince his ancient people of the native corruption of their hearts, which they were unwilling to acknowledge and endeavored to conceal.—"Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel." This was the noble profession they made, with a view to conceal the native corruption of their hearts. But the Lord of hosts tells them, "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth and I shewed them; I did them suddenly and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate; and thy neck is an iron sinew and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them; my graven image and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this;

and will not ye declare it? I have shewed the new things from this time, even hidden things and thou didst not know them. They are created now and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb." God here traces all the insincerity, stupidity, obstinacy, ignorance and unbelief of sinners to the native depravity of their hearts, which led them to disregard his commands and to disbelieve his predictions. The text in this connection naturally leads us to conclude,

That mankind begin to sin, as soon as they become capable of sinning. I shall,

I. Show what we are to understand by sin;

II. Show when men become capable of sinning;

III. Show that they do sin, as soon as they become capable of sinning; And,

IV. Show why they always have sinful exercises before they have any holy ones.

I. I am to show what is to be understood by sin. The apostle John has given us a concise and just definition of sin. "Sin is a transgression of the law." if then we can determine what the law requires, we can determine what a transgression of it is; and if we can find what a transgression of it is, we can find what sin is. The law, we know, requires true love to God and man. True love is the fulfilling of the law. And true love consists in disinterested, impartial, universal benevolence. The transgression of the law, therefore, must essentially consist in something, which is directly

opposite to such pure, holy love. And there is nothing in nature more directly opposite to perfectly disinterested love, than interested love, or selfishness. So that all sin consists in the free, voluntary exercise of selfishness. As true love is a free, voluntary exercise of a moral agent; so false love is a free, voluntary exercise of a moral agent. And as a mere want of love is not obedience to the law; so a mere want of selfishness is not a transgression of the law. A mere want of any thing has no properties, either good or evil. It follows, that nothing short of the positive exercise of true love is obedience to the law; and nothing short of the positive exercise of selfishness is a transgression of the law. There is, indeed, a distinction often made between internal and external obedience; and between internal and external disobedience. But this distinction is merely apparent and not real; for all real obedience is internal and lies in the heart and not in the outward act. And so all real disobedience is internal and lies in the heart and not in the outward act.--- This ought to be remembered, when we come to speak of the first sinful exercises, which take place in the human heart.

Having considered what sin is, I proceed to show,

II. When mankind become capable of sinning.

If sin be a free, voluntary, moral exercise, it must be supposed, that they are not capable of sinning before they become moral agents. Here then it seems necessary to inquire, what mental powers and faculties are necessary to constitute a moral agent. Perception, memory and volition appear to be the essential powers or properties, which constitute a free agent. Animals are free agents. They act freely and volun-

tarily in the view of motives. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib. The ox has perception, volition and memory. The ox, as well as the ass, knows his master and his master's crib, and remembers where he was fed and freely and voluntarily goes to the place he remembers, to be fed again. He is, therefore, a free, voluntary agent. But he is not a moral agent; for his perception, memory and volition cannot give him a capacity to know what is right and what is wrong. He does not know that it is right to feed at his master's crib, and wrong to feed at another man's crib. No animals have any higher mental powers, than perception, memory and volition; and therefore, they are not, and cannot be made moral agents, at any period of their existence. But God has made man wiser than the beasts of the field and fowls of the air; and endued him not only with perception, reason, memory, and volition, but with a moral faculty to discern moral good and moral evil.—This moral faculty is what we call conscience, by which we discover what is right and what is wrong in ourselves and others. The faculty itself has no moral excellence in it, and is called a moral rather than a mere natural faculty, because it enables us to distinguish moral actions or exercises from mere natural actions. Having found what mental powers and faculties constitute a mere agent; and what mental powers and faculties constitute a moral agent, we may, perhaps, easily and certainly determine when a little animal becomes an agent and when a little child becomes a moral agent and capable of acting right, or wrong. We know, that a little lamb becomes an agent, as soon as it possesses perception, memory, and volition; for so

soon we see it move and act freely and voluntary in the view of motives or external objects. Why then do we not as certainly know, that a little child becomes a moral agent, as soon as it possesses perception, reason, conscience, memory, and volition? And why must we not suppose, that the little child becomes possessed of all the mental powers and faculties, which constitute him a moral agent as early as the little lamb becomes possessed of all the mental powers and faculties which constitute it a natural agent?--- We are obliged in both cases to judge by actions and not by words. Does not the little child appear to move and act freely and voluntarily in the view of motives, long before it is capable of speaking? Why then may it not become a moral agent, as early as the little lamb becomes a natural agent? Or at least, why may it not become a moral agent before it is capable of speaking? We know that a child discovers volition before it is capable of speaking, for it exercises choice and prefers one thing to another. It choses light rather than darkness and to be with one person rather than another. It discovers memory before it can speak; and recollects what it has found to be agreeable to it. And it discovers reason and conscience, before it can speak those words. For if it be unreasonably and unjustly corrected, it will manifest a sense of the injury it suffers, by sighing and sobbing, rather than crying. If we may judge by analogy between little children and larger children, or between little children and those that are universally allowed to be moral agents, we must be apt to believe, that little children are moral agents, before they are capable of uttering a single word. The only objection against

children's being so early moral agents is, that they have not knowledge enough to be moral agents. But who can tell how much knowledge they must have, before they become moral agents? Every one will allow that a child seven years old is a moral agent and capable of knowing what is right and what is wrong. Almost every body will allow, that a child four years old is a moral agent and capable of knowing what is right and what is wrong. And those, who allow, that a child four years old is a moral agent and knows what is right and wrong, will generally allow, that a child two years old is a moral agent and knows what is right and what is wrong. And where shall we stop? Why may we not suppose, that a child one year old, or half a year old is a moral agent and knows what is right and what is wrong in some cases? It is not necessary, that a child should know, that there is a God, or that the bible is his word, in order to know, that it is right to obey its parents and wrong to disobey them; or that it is right for one child to have its own playthings and wrong for another to take them away without his consent. The bare light of nature, or the dictates of conscience are sufficient to teach little children what is right and what is wrong, in the cases that have been mentioned and in a multitude of other similar cases. If children do not become moral agents as soon as they possess and exercise the mental powers and faculties, which render them capable of moral agency, we can never know when they do become moral agents. They are men in miniature and not mere animals. Their free, voluntary exercises and actions are moral exercises and actions; and essentially different from the free and voluntary actions

of a young lamb, or any other young animal, which is destitute of conscience, or a faculty of distinguishing between moral good and evil. But that they do sin, as soon as they are capable of sinning, is a point still to be proved. Accordingly, I proceed to show,

III. That they do sin as soon as they become capable of sinning. As soon as they become capable of exercising selfishness, they become capable of exercising benevolence ; or as soon as they become capable of exercising morally good, they are capable of exercising morally evil affections. Their first moral exercises must be either morally sinful, or morally good. For as soon as they possess those mental powers and faculties, which render them capable of moral agency, they must act in the view of the objects they perceive ; and either love or hate them, in a sinful, or holy manner. They must act as moral agents ; and their first free and voluntary exercises must be either morally good or morally evil. There is certainly a time, when they begin to act as moral agents ; and the question now before us is, whether at that time they always begin to sin ?

Now, so far as we can derive any evidence from observation, on this subject, we must conclude, that they begin to sin as soon as they become moral agents, or as soon as it is possible they should begin to sin.--- They certainly discover, as early as possible, impatience, obstinacy and revenge, which are sinful exercises in any moral agent, that can distinguish between right and wrong. And that children, before they can speak or walk, do know that these are evil exercises, appears from their conduct, when they are corrected for them. Correction directly tends to restrain and

still them. They appear differently under just and unjust correction, which is a presumptive evidence, that they discern the moral difference between deserved and undeserved corrections. We not only early discover impatience, obstinacy and revenge in children, but real selfishness, which is the essence of all sin. How soon do they begin to covet each other's property and display art, deception, and falsehood to obtain it unjustly? Does not such conduct indicate, that they act wrong as soon as they are capable of acting wrong?--- These appearances of moral depravity in little children carry conviction to parents, who are partial in their favour. Where is there a parent, who will not reprove, or correct his children as soon as they discover their selfishness in coveting and fraudulently taking what is not their own? And if it carries this evidence to parents, why should it not carry still stronger conviction to all other critical and impartial observers? Observation, therefore, affords a strong presumptive evidence, that children begin to sin, as soon as they are moral agents, or capable of sinning.

The testimony of observation on this subject is strengthened, at least, by the testimony of experience. Every person in the world is conscious of sinning and of sinning as long ago as he can remember. He has, therefore, as strong an evidence as he can have, from his own experience, that he began to sin, as early as he became a moral agent, or capable of sinning. Every person has the evidence of experience, that he began to sin as early as possible and no experimental evidence to the contrary. The evidence of experience, therefore, corroborates the evidence of observation, that children do begin to sin as soon as they are capable

of sinning. So far as others have told them how they appeared and acted in childhood; and so far as they remember how they appeared and acted in childhood, they have strong presumptive evidence, that they were by nature children of disobedience, and transgressors in infancy. And if we now look into the bible, we shall there find conclusive and infallible evidence that mankind do actually sin, as soon as they become moral agents and are capable of sinning. All the inspired writers bear united testimony to this melancholy truth. God says to every sinner in Zion, "I knew that thou wouldest deal treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb." After God had swept away the wicked from the face of the earth, "he said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." David says, "the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent." Seneca, a heathen philosopher, observes, "that serpents do not receive their poison when they bite, but they had it before by nature."—Again David says of himself, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Though these passages of scripture are not to be understood literally, yet they undoubtedly mean, that mankind begin to sin as soon as their rational nature renders them capable of sinning. When we say, a serpent is naturally poisonous, we mean that it is poisonous as soon as its nature renders it capable of having poison. So when the inspired writers speak of men's sinning as soon sa they be born, their expressions plainly imply, that they are sinners by nature, or begin to sin as soon

as they are capable of sinning. This same sentiment we find taught in more plain and literal terms, by Job.--- He emphatically asks, "What is man that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" This question carries in it a strong affirmation, that mankind are naturally sinners, and always sin as soon as they become men in miniature or moral agents. Solomon says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it from him." This must mean moral folly, which lies in the heart; for the rod of correction cannot drive away the folly, that lies in the understanding. The apostle tells the Ephesian converts, that they had been dead in trespasses and sins; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others; that is, even as all the rest of mankind were by nature.

These representations of the sinfulness and guilt of childhood are confirmed by God's providential treatment of children. Natural death has reigned over all mankind from Adam to Moses and from Moses to this day. Death is a natural evil and threatened to mankind as a punishment for sin. When God inflicts death upon the human race, it indicates that they are guilty of sin. God has not threatened death to the animal creation, and therefore his inflicting death upon them does not indicate that he punishes them for sin. But the apostle represents death as a punishment inflicted upon the children of men. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." According to the calculation of some, one half of mankind die before they are eight years old. We know, however, that God inflicts death upon old and

young without any discrimination. He destroyed the children in Sodom, though he declared he would not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Thus it appears from observation and experience and from scripture declarations and facts, that men begin to sin as soon as they become moral agents and capable of sinning. It only remains to show,

IV. Why they always have sinful before they have holy exercises. Whenever they become moral agents and capable of exercising sinful affections, they at that time become capable of exercising holy affections. But it appears from what has been said, that they always have sinful before they have any holy exercises. If this were not true, they would not be, by nature, depraved, any more than Adam was before he lost the moral image of God. I know some suppose, that they do have holy affections before they have sinful ones. But I shall now take it for granted that it has been proved, that their first moral exercises are sinful and not holy. And on this supposition, the question now to be answered is, why do they begin to sin before they ever begin to be holy. Here it is evident, that it is not because they are not as capable of exercising holy affections, as unholy and sinful ones. Nor is it because they have derived a corrupt and sinful nature from Adam, which is prior to and the cause of their sinful exercises. I know this is often supposed, but the supposition is absurd. For it is impossible to conceive of a corrupt and sinful nature, prior to and distinct from corrupt and sinful exercises. Sin is a free, voluntary exercise, which cannot be transferred from one person to another. Men do not, therefore, begin to sin before they begin to be holy, because they derived a

corrupt and sinful nature from Adam. Nor do they begin to sin before they begin to be holy, because they have a self-determining power. This is generally supposed, by those who deny native depravity. They suppose, that mankind are not moral agents as soon as they come into the world; and during that interval of of time, after they have come into the world, until they become moral agents, be that term longer or shorter, they suppose they are no more inclined to evil than to good. But they suppose, that as soon as they become moral agents, they possess a self-determining power, which is essential to moral agency. By this power they mean a self-sufficient, independent power, to produce their own free and voluntary exercises. And they suppose, as soon as children become moral agents, they exercise their self-determining power, and actually begin to choose good, before they begin to choose evil. But there is nothing in reason, or scripture to support this mode of accounting for the native innocence of children. For it can be demonstrated by reason, that children do not possess a self-determining power when they become moral agents. And it has been, perhaps, sufficiently proved, that children always begin to choose evil, before they begin to choose good. The question then still returns, Why do they as soon as they become moral agents, always choose evil, before they choose good? I can give no better reason than this: God appointed Adam to be the public head of his posterity, and determined, in case of his disobedience, that they should begin to sin, before they should begin to be holy. This determination God has executed, by directly operating on the hearts of children, when they first become moral agents.---

The native depravity of all mankind comes in this way, in consequence of Adam's first sin. This representation is confirmed by the express declaration of the apostle. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Though men have sought out many inventions to account for the native depravity of the human race; yet there appears no other way, than this which has been mentioned, to account for it, agreeable to reason, and scripture.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the native depravity of children consists in having free, voluntary, sinful affections as soon as they become moral agents, and before they have any holy exercises; then the scripture doctrine of native depravity has nothing in it unreasonable and absurd.--- Those, who disbelieve and deny the native depravity of children, always deny it on the ground of absurdity. But if they do not become depraved before they become moral agents, where is the absurdity of their having free, voluntary, sinful exercises at that time, any more than at any other period of their lives? Upon their own principle, whenever they become moral agents, let that time be when it will, they are then capable of choosing either good, or evil; and there is no more absurdity in their choosing evil first, than in their choosing good first. It is just as difficult for those, who maintain, that children exercise free, voluntary, holy affections at first, to account for their having holy exercises before they have sinful; as it is for those, who maintain, that children have free, voluntary, sinful exercises at first, to account for their having free, voluntary, sinful exercises before they have

holy. Those, who deny, and those who maintain native depravity, both allow that children do not become morally depraved, before they become moral agents. And after they become moral agents, both allow that they are capable of having either good or bad moral exercises. There is no absurdity in either of these opinions. If God had determined, notwithstanding Adam's apostacy, that his posterity should begin to be holy, as soon as they became moral agents, there would be no absurdity in supposing that they should begin to be holy before they should begin to be sinful. And since it appears, that God has determined, in consequence of Adam's apostacy, that his posterity shall begin to be sinful, as soon as they become moral agents, there is no absurdity in believing and maintaining, that they do begin to be sinful, before they begin to be holy.--- There can be no solid objection against native depravity, drawn from reason or scripture ; but there can be, as we have seen, solid arguments in favor of native depravity, drawn from scripture, reason, observation and experience. If those, who deny the doctrine of native depravity, would maintain their opinion, they must prove that native depravity is inconsistent with free agency, or that it is contrary to scripture and the universal observation and experience of mankind. But this, it is believed, they never have done and never can do. For the doctrine of native depravity has been constantly maintained among the great majority of those, who have called themselves and been called orthodox christians, from the days of the apostles to this day ; notwithstanding all the genius, learning and criticism, which have been employed to refute this scriptural doctrine. The subject is extremely inter-

esting, both in a theoretical and practical view; and it deeply concerns every individual to understand and approve the truth in respect to his moral state by nature.

2. It appears from what has been said concerning native depravity, that if children die before they become moral agents, it is most rational to conclude, that they are annihilated. As they are totally destitute of moral exercises, which are either virtuous or sinful, they do not appear to be proper subjects of praise or blame, reward or punishment. It is certainly supposeable, that children may exist in this world, some space of time, before they become moral agents; but how long that space may be, whether an hour, a day, or a month, or a year, or several years, as many suppose, we do not presume to determine. But during that space, whether longer or shorter, they are not moral agents, nor consequently accountable creatures in the sight of God, or man. It is rational to conclude, therefore, that God will not treat them as accountable creatures, nor reward or punish them. Of course, we must conclude, that they will be annihilated. This was the opinion of Dr. Watts; and it seems to be well founded.

3. If any children are saved, who die soon after they become moral agents, they are undoubtedly regenerated before they are taken out of the world. They stand in the same relation to and connection with Adam, that the rest of mankind do and become sinful before they become holy, in consequence of his apostacy. And for this reason, they need to be renewed and sanctified, as well as adult persons, in order to be qualified for the enjoyments and employments of heaven. As they are moral agents, they are capable of having ho-

ly, after they have had unholy affections; and God is able to produce holy as well as unholy affections in their heart. If he sanctified Jeremiah and John the baptist from the womb, or as early as they needed to be and could be sanctified; then he is able to sanctify those young children, who die soon after they become moral agents, before he takes them out of the world, and conducts them to heaven, if he ever does save such. He has not been pleased to inform us expressly, whether he does renew the hearts of the whole, or a part, or none of those little children, who die soon after they become moral agents. As they then become morally depraved, it is plain, that, in point of justice, he may then leave them all to perish in their native depravity and guilt. Or in mercy, he may renew them all.--- But from all the light we can find in scripture on this subject, it seems to be the most probable opinion, that he renews only some of those, who die soon after they become morally depraved and guilty. He has indeed given some encouragements, or conditional promises to believing parents, that he will renew and save their children, if they die soon after they have become sinners. But they must be left in his holy, sovereign and merciful hands.

4. If children are by nature depraved, then they are by nature children of wrath; and if any of them are saved, they must be saved through the atonement of Christ, as well as any other sinners. They have sinned and the wages of sin is death. They justly deserve eternal death for their first sinful exercises; and God cannot consistently pardon them, on any other ground, than the atonement of Christ. Christ, by his sufferings and death on the cross, tasted death for every man and made atonement for the sins of the whole

world. So that God can now consistently forgive or justify every one, that is born of the Spirit and become holy. Hence says the apostle, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." As soon as the youngest sinner is born of God, he is a new creature, has a new nature and is a child of God.--Though he cannot exercise repentance towards God, nor faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; yet he may exercise true benevolence, which is true holiness, and God may pardon and save him through the atonement of Christ, on the condition of benevolence, as well as on the condition of repentance, or faith or any other exercise of holiness. There is reason to think, that many persons were saved before the gospel day, who had no distinct knowledge of, or faith in Christ. Their hearts, indeed, were changed and they loved and obeyed the God of Israel and believed that an atonement for sin would be made, but had little or no knowledge of him, by whom the atonement would be made. God saw Christ as a lamb, slain from the foundation of the world; and for his sake he pardoned all, whom he saved before his incarnation and death. And just so, he may pardon little children, whom he renews and causes to exercise holy affections, though they are ignorant of him and of Christ, for whose sake he forgives and admits them to heaven. It is sufficient for God to know, that he pardons and saves them on the ground of Christ's atonement; and when they arrive in heaven, they will love and trust in Christ as their only Savior.

5. If all mankind are depraved by nature; then the doctrine of native depravity is a primary and fundamental doctrine of the gospel. It was solely because God saw all mankind in a depraved, guilty and perishing condition, that he formed the plan of redemp-

tion, and provided a Savior for them. Christ said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." To execute this gracious design, Christ declares, "he came to seek and save them that are lost." According to these infallible declarations, the native depravity of mankind lies at the foundation of christianity. It is as necessary to believe this doctrine, as to believe the gospel; and it is as important to maintain this doctrine, as to maintain the gospel. If any one doctrine of the gospel may be said to be more fundamental, essential and important than another, it is the doctrine of the NATIVE DEPRAVITY of all mankind, without a single exception. In this important light, it has been viewed, believed and defended in every age of the christian Church. And it is as important now as ever it was, to believe, to approve and to defend this humiliating doctrine. For the denial of it directly tends to corrupt the hearts and destroy the souls of men, and to subvert every other fundamental doctrine of the gospel. It is well known, that there is a tendency in those, who deny the doctrine of the native depravity of all mankind, to deny the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of eternal punishment and the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the scriptures. When all these doctrines are exploded from the gospel, is there one peculiar, or essential doctrine left? I would not be understood to assert, that every one, who denies the doctrine of native depravity, runs all these lengths in error. Some are not capable of seeing the connection between one error and another. Some are too indolent to trace the connection. And

some stop short, through fear of plunging into the abyss of gross infidelity. But this is no evidence, that the denial of native depravity does not naturally tend to lead men into all the fatal errors, which have been mentioned. It is extremely important, therefore, that the doctrine of native depravity should be plainly taught, properly explained and firmly supported, to guard men against an approximation towards the errors, which are zealously propagated, by those who lie in wait to deceive and destroy. It is one evidence of native depravity, that mankind so generally love error better than truth. This led Christ to tell those who rejected the doctrines he taught, "Ye believe not, because I tell you the truth."

6 If all men are by nature depraved; then all sinners are in a very guilty and dangerous condition. They have always been totally destitute of the least degree of true holiness. They have never had the love of God in them, nor ever exercised one right affection towards him, or any other object; but every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts has been evil, only evil continually. They began to sin as soon as they were capable of sinning and have continued sinning without interruption, through every day and period of their lives. Their sins have been increasing from childhood to youth and from youth to manhood, in number, magnitude and aggravations. For they have misimproved and abused their time, their talents, their interests, their influence and all the means and opportunities they have enjoyed of doing and getting good. All these evil things have flowed from the plague of their hearts or native depravity. God has been justly angry with them every day; and his wrath still abides upon them; yet nevertheless, they rush on the thick

bosses of his buckler. It is certainly of the Lord's mercies, that they have not been consumed. He has always been able to destroy them, while he has been waiting upon them, to be gracious to them. Have they not great reason to fear his patience is nearly exhausted and that there is but a step between them and temporal and eternal death? There is nothing but their criminal stupidity, that now prevents their seeing and realizing their guilty and deplorable condition.—This stupidity would be immediately removed, if they would only shew themselves men, turn off their eyes from beholding vanities, and realize the plague of their own hearts and the dreadful effects which have flowed from it, through the whole course of their past lives. Why then do they not look into their own hearts and realize their guilty and perishing condition? The faulty cause is their native depravity, which blinds their understanding and sears their conscience. But,

7. It appears from what has been said concerning their native depravity, that it affords no excuse for their past transgression, and is no obstacle in the way of their immediately performing the gracious and condescending conditions of salvation. Their native depravity does not consist in any corrupt nature or dormant principle entailed upon them by Adam, without their knowledge, desire, or consent; but it consists in their own free, voluntary exercises of selfishness, which is the essence of their criminality and admits of no excuse. They did not begin to sin, before they became free, moral agents. Their first sinful exercises were as really criminal, as any of their past sinful exercises. They began to sin freely and voluntarily, as Adam did at first; and they have al-

ways continued to sin freely and voluntarily. The reason why they have not always loved God, is because they have hated him without a cause. The reason why they have not come to Christ, is because they would not come to him, that they might have life.--- Such free, voluntary enmity to God and to Christ, is unspeakably criminal and admits of no excuse ; and is the very thing for which they deserve eternal death.--- And of course, it lays them under no natural inability to love God supremely, or to believe in Christ immediately. They can act as freely in loving, as in hating God and in believing in Christ, as in rejecting him. They have no excuse for neglecting to do their first work, till a more convenient season. God now commands every one, who is in the state of nature, to put away his native depravity and immediately comply with the terms of mercy, which he has proposed in the gospel. He does not allow him to plead his old, obstinate heart as an excuse ; but requires him to put off the old man and put on the new and walk in newness of life the residue of his days. Life and death are now set before every one ; and his free choice must determine his eternal destiny.

I must not conclude this discourse, without applying it to parents in particular, who are deeply concerned in it, not merely on their own account, but more especially on account of their children. These are committed to their peculiar care and instruction. Notwithstanding their children have so many amiable natural qualities, which excite their most fond affections ; yet they are by nature depraved and children of wrath.--- Their hearts are fully set in them to do evil and soon as possible, they go astray, speaking and acting wrong.

They carry about with them evil hearts, which expose them to run into the paths of the destroyer, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.--- And it depends, under God, upon parents whether they shall avoid every evil and false way and pursue the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life.--- You do, in a very important sense, carry the temporal and eternal interests of your children in your own hands. And can you bear the thought, that they should perish forever, through your guilty negligence? God has required you to give up your children to him, and bring them up for him. It never more concerned parents to instruct and restrain their children faithfully, than at this day. All the duties of parents are very nearly connected ; but there seems to be a more visible connection between the duty and happiness of parents, in respect to their children than in respect to almost any other duty. If you neglect your duty to your children, your children will very probably correct you for your neglect, in ways that will pierce your hearts with the keenest sorrow and anguish.--- But have you any reason to expect, that you shall take proper care of your children, if you do not take proper care of yourselves ? You must give God your hearts, before you can give your children to him, or expect that he will teach you to teach them. Will you for a moment, anticipate the tremendous consequences of neglecting yourselves and your children ! Be entreated to avoid those tremendous consequences and resolve to do all in your power, to prepare yourselves and your children for the kingdom of glory.

SERMON XIII.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HUMAN HEART.

JEREMIAH, XVII. 9.—*The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

This passage of scripture is very often quoted; and almost as often misunderstood and misapplied. All self-deceivers are fond of believing, that the heart is so wicked and so deceitful, that it is impossible for any to know whether they are in the state of nature, or of grace. They frequently say, they sincerely desire to know their hearts, yet they are so extremely deceitful, that it is utterly out of their power. It is, therefore, of great practical importance to exhibit the spirit of this text and unfold its true meaning. It is evident, that God is here addressing sinners, whose hearts alone are desperately wicked. And this being true, it naturally follows that they are the persons, who find it so extremely difficult to know their own hearts. The prophet plainly supposes, that the wickedness of their hearts is the ground of their deceitfulness; and their deceitfulness is the ground of the difficulty in knowing them. So that the question in the text is, who among sinners can know the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of their own hearts? And this question leads us to conclude,

That it is extremely difficult for sinners to know their own hearts.

The truth of this proposition none will be disposed to dispute; for saints know it to be true by their own experience; and sinners in general are fond of believing it to be true. I shall therefore only attempt to show,

I. What is implied in their knowing their own hearts; And,

II. Why this is so extremely difficult for them to know.

I. We are to consider what is implied in their knowing their own hearts.

They are as conscious of their own hearts as saints are of theirs. They know that they have hearts, which are distinct from perception, reason, conscience and all their intellectual powers and faculties. But this knowledge of their hearts is not that, which is intended in the text. For in this sense, they may perfectly know their own hearts, while they remain entirely ignorant of them in other important respects. This leads me to observe,

1. That their knowing their hearts, in the sense of the text, implies the knowledge of their selfishness. It is this alone, that distinguishes their hearts from the hearts of saints. Those, who bear the moral image of God, have hearts of universal and disinterested benevolence. But the hearts of sinners are wholly selfish. Saints love those, who do not love them; but sinners love those only, who do love them; and all the criminality of their hearts consists in their partial, interested affections. They may love all the objects, that saints love and hate all the objects that saints hate; and yet all their affections be different, in their nature, from the affections of saints. Whether they love or hate

good or bad objects, still their love and hatred is entirely sinful, because it is altogether selfish. This they are not apt to know, nor believe. They often think, that however different they may be, in other respects, from saints, yet they do not differ from them in point of selfishness. They imagine they have both love to God and man, which does not arise from mercenary motives. But they cannot be said to know their own hearts, until they know that all their desires and affections are of a selfish nature and actually flow from love to themselves.

2. The knowledge of their hearts implies the knowledge of their desperate, incurable wickedness. Their hearts are selfish and so selfish, that no means, or mere secondary causes can cure them. For their selfishness does not arise from ignorance of themselves. And other beings and objects, but from their placing their supreme love wholly on themselves. No intellectual light or moral motives, which can be exhibited before them, will have the least tendency to alter or meliorate their hearts. Were it possible for them to have a clear, just and comprehensive view of themselves, of God, of Christ, of all the truths in the bible and of all things in this and in every other world, it would only serve to excite love to themselves and make them sensible, that they valued their own interest and happiness more than the interests and happiness of the universe. And though they should feel the impropriety and criminality of such selfish affections, yet this would have no tendency to destroy their feelings, or to make them truly benevolent. Hence their hearts are desperately wicked. There is no hope of their ever becoming better, from any motives that can be set before them, or

from any means, which can be used with them. And until sinners see their hearts in this light, they are unacquainted with them and know not the nature and depth of their own depravity. Besides,

3. Their knowing their own hearts implies their knowing their extreme deceitfulness. They are deceitful above all things. There is nothing so apt to deceive. They will deceive not only once or twice, but a thousand times. They will deceive every day, every hour, and almost every moment. They are perpetually changing and putting on new and different appearances. They change as often as the objects, upon which they are placed, change. They will love one object this moment, and quite a different one the next. The object, which they hated yesterday, they will love to-day; and the object, they love to-day, they will hate to-morrow. They are as unstable as water, and as changeable as the wind. And it is this mutability, which makes them so deceitful. Sinners have no ground to place the least dependance on their hearts. And they cannot be said to know them, until they become thoroughly acquainted with their extreme deceitfulness. Having considered what is implied in their knowing their own hearts, I proceed to show,

II. Why it is so extremely difficult for them to gain this knowledge. "The heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it?" According to this representation, there must be some great difficulty of some kind or other, in the way of sinners knowing their own hearts. But from what does this difficulty principally arise? Certainly it cannot arise from their being incapable of knowing what passes in their own minds. They have as quick a sense of feeling as saints

have ; and are as conscious of the operations of their own hearts. When they love or hate, choose or refuse, they are conscious of having these exercises and of perceiving the objects of their love and hatred, or of their choice and rejection. So that the difficulty of knowing their own hearts cannot arise from this quarter. Nor can it arise from their being incapable of discerning the moral nature of their voluntary exercises. Their consciences are as good as the consciences of saints ; and they are as capable of knowing the criminality of all their selfish affections. This is evident from the experience of sinners. Sometimes they are conscious of the criminality of all their desires and hopes and fears ; and feel self-condemned for being entirely destitute of true love to God and man, and being entirely absorbed in love to their own present and future happiness. They know that they have such feelings ; and they know that such feelings are altogether criminal. And this, which some sinners know, all might know ; for all have the same capacity and means of knowing. So that they are under no natural inability of knowing their own hearts as fully as saints know theirs. But yet there is a great difficulty in their knowing their own hearts. This leads me to observe,

1. They are unwilling to know their own hearts. This is true of all sinners. Accordingly Christ says, "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." It always gives pain to sinners to know their own hearts, because it always brings guilt and danger into view. There is no knowledge so disagreeable to them, as the knowledge of their hearts. Yea, no knowledge would

be disagreeable to them, if they were only willing to know themselves. But this unwillingness to become acquainted with their hearts, is extremely great and renders it next to impossible to give them this important and necessary knowledge. It obstructed the instructions of the prophets, of Christ, of the apostles and of thousands of Christ's ambassadors since his day. Sinners will shut their eyes and stop their ears against the truth; and if possible, remain ignorant of their own hearts. They cannot bear to see the total and incurable sinfulness and malignity of their hearts and the dreadful evils, which appear to be connected with such odious and destructive affections. To think of being holden by the cords of their iniquities and bound over by them to endless destruction, makes them shrink back from the knowledge of themselves; and in a manner, compels them to prefer darkness to light. They had rather rest in ignorance and ease than search into the corruptions of their hearts and discover such a source of guilt and wretchedness, as they carry about with them. This is one great difficulty in the way of their knowing themselves. But,

2. There is another thing, which renders it still more difficult for them to know their own hearts. It is what the scripture calls the deceitfulness of sin. All sin is selfishness and all selfishness is deceitful. For selfishness will put on ten thousand different appearances. It will always change, as the circumstances of sinners change; and dispose them to feel differently in every different situation. The desperate wickedness or selfishness of the natural heart is represented in the text, as the cause of its extreme deceitfulness; and its extreme deceitfulness is represented as the cause of

the extreme difficulty in the way of sinners knowing their own hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" What sinner can know his own heart, which is totally corrupt, perfectly selfish and extremely deceitful? How can he become acquainted with all its turnings and windings under all the situations and various circumstances, in which he is placed; and amidst all the variety of objects, with which he is surrounded? His heart will vary just as his outward circumstances and inward views vary. He will perpetually feel towards every being, every creature and every object, just as it tends to promote, or obstruct his own happiness. This is true of all sinners. They love or hate all objects just as they view them as having a favorable or unfavorable aspect, in respect to themselves. In particular,

1. They love, or hate God, just as he appears friendly, or unfriendly to them. While he smiles upon them in his providence and grants them the desires of their hearts, they are well pleased with him. They rejoice that God is, that he governs the world and that he fills the earth with his goodness. They have no consciousness of the least enmity against him; but are disposed to speak well of him and give thanks at the remembrance of his mercies. This was the disposition of the Israelites at the side of the red sea. They could joyfully join in celebrating the praises of God for their great and signal deliverance. They sang his praise with gladness of heart. And all other sinners would have done the same under the same circumstances.--- Their selfish hearts are always pleased with the favors God bestows upon them and they love him, so long as

they think he loves them. And they are no less pleased with spiritual than temporal favors. When they imagine God is disposed to forgive their sins and admit them to heaven, they will sensibly rejoice in the hope of eternal life. In a word, they will always love God, while they believe he loves them and intends to do them good. But on the other hand, whenever he appears opposed to them, their hearts are opposed to him.--- Their selfish hearts dispose them to hate God himself, when he appears to stand, in the way of their happiness. This was exemplified in the Israelites, who sang his praises, but soon forgot his works. As soon as they perceived that he was an holy, sin-hating and sin-revenging God, disposed to destroy them for their unholy, selfish affections, they turned against him, murmured, complained and expressed their bitter opposition to him, by saying, he has brought us into the wilderness to destroy us. The selfish hearts of sinners always will dispose them to love or hate God, just as they view him friendly or unfriendly to them.

2. The hearts of sinners love or hate Christ, accordingly as he appears to be their friend or their enemy. This was verified through the whole course of his public ministry. While they viewed him as their friend and temporal deliverer, they flocked around him in multitudes wherever he went and rent the air with their hosannah's. But when he let them know his true character, his ultimate design and his real feelings, their selfish hearts immediately changed, their love turned to enmity and they zealously cried, "Crucify, crucify him." He knew what was in their hearts before they expressed it in words and deed; and therefore refused to commit himself to those, who professed to believe in

him, to love and follow him. Though many followed him by land and by water and manifested peculiar love and attachment to him, yet they deserted him as soon as he exposed and condemned their selfish motives. This he did most plainly. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." And "from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him."

3. The hearts of sinners love or hate good men, just as they appear for them or against them. Job was the delight and admiration of sinners, while his heart and hand were opened in distributing numerous favors to them, which their needy circumstances required. But when he was no longer able to continue his favors to them, their love turned into neglect, contempt and reproach. Moses, at one time, was the object of universal love and veneration, but at another, the object of general disapprobation and complaint, among the selfish Israelites. At one time, sinners were ready to pluck out their eyes for Paul; and at another, they hated him most heartily, because he told them the truth. When sinners are in distress of mind, they will fly to saints for instruction; but when they become careless and secure, they will shun and avoid them. When they are in prosperity, they despise the prayers of saints; but when they are sick, or in trouble and affliction, they will desire and value them. Indeed, whenever they view good men as their friends and benefactors, they love them; but when they view them as opposed to their evil hearts and conduct, they hate them. This Christ told his disciples to expect from the world. "If ye were of the world, the world

would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And Solomon says, "An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way, is abomination to the wicked."

4. Sinners love and hate one another, just as they appear to promote or obstruct their interest. Herod and Pontius Pilate were entirely opposed to each other, as long as their interests interfered, but became friends as soon as their interests and designs coincided. Nations, who have been the most hostile to each other, will become friendly and enter into the most solemn compacts to continue so; but they will not continue so any longer than they find it for their interest to continue their peace and amity. Careless and stupid sinners will generally unite in the neglect of their spiritual concerns; but when one and another are awakened to flee from the wrath to come and to seek eternal life, their warmest attachments are weakened, if not destroyed; and they view their former friends as enemies to them, as well as to all righteousness and studiously avoid their company and corrupting influence. For no persons appear more odious and dangerous than those, who would prevent their entering into the kingdom of God.

5. The hearts of sinners lead them to love or hate the world, in which they live, accordingly as it smiles or frowns upon them. While the seasons roll round favorably and produce plenty, peace, health and prosperity, they love the world and the things of the world; but when they are in trouble, sickness and distress, the world loses all its charms and they hate and renounce the objects, which they once loved and pursued,

as destructive to their present and future peace. Their love and hatred of the world, is always correspondent to their hopes or fears from it. If it smiles upon them while they are stupid, they love it; but if it frowns upon them, while they are awakened, they hate it. If it smiles upon them, while they are young, they are charmed with it; but if it frowns upon them when they are old, they are sick of it and hate it. Their love or hatred of the world always vary as their inward views and the different stages and circumstances of life vary.

6. They love and hate their own hearts, as they appear to promise good or threaten evil to them. While their hearts afford them pleasure, they are pleased with them. They love their stupidity, impenitence and unbelief. They ~~have~~ love their pride, self-sufficiency, independence and every selfish affection. But when these selfish exercises plunge them in disappointment, trouble and adversity and threaten them with future and eternal ruin, then they hate their hearts, wish to restrain them and would give all the world to get rid of them. Their hearts are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Their hearts, in which they once trusted as very good, appear to be what God told them they were, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked and destructive of all peace and hope.

7. Their hearts lead them to love or hate the means of grace, accordingly as they appear to do them good or hurt. The bible, the sabbath, the preaching of the gospel, are disagreeable to them, while they are in pursuit of worldly happiness. They despise, neglect, and resist these means of grace in the days of inward

peace and outward prosperity; but when they turn their attention to their eternal interests and soberly seek the salvation of their souls, all the means of grace appear extremely precious. They highly value the bible, the sabbath and the preaching of the gospel. They can find time to read the bible, they can find ways to get to the house of God and they can listen to the voice of divine truth; and after they have heard it, they find time to meditate and call upon God for mercy. The same selfish hearts, which led them to neglect, will lead them to improve every means and advantage they enjoy, to promote their spiritual and eternal good.

8. They love or hate convictions accordingly as they appear to have a favorable, or unfavorable aspect upon their future happiness. As long as they think they can be happy without them, they hate them and do all they can to quench the Spirit and restrain the painful reflections of their awakened consciences.--- But when they are persuaded that they are necessary to promote their conversion and salvation, they ardently seek to cherish and increase them. They are afraid of saying, or doing, or neglecting any thing, which has a tendency to lessen or destroy their convictions, or drive them back into their former state of stupidity. Though they hate to realize their guilt and danger, yet they had rather suffer these painful feelings, than to be left to pine away in their sins forever.

9. They love or hate heaven according to the views they have of it. When they view it as a place of perfect and perpetual happiness, they love it and desire to take up their everlasting residence in it. But when

they view it as a place of pure and perfect holiness, they hate it and rather run the risk of everlasting separation from it, than to enter into the presence of a holy God and into the society of perfectly holy beings. And when they view it as the happy residence of those, who are elected to eternal life, their hearts rise in sensible enmity to God and to his chosen people.

Thus it appears, that the hearts of sinners perpetually change, as the circumstances, relations and connection of things change, without any regard to their natures. They love the same beings and the same objects at one time, and hate them at another ; and they love the same things in them at one time, and hate them at another. They may one day, or one hour, love what saints love ; and the next day, or the next hour, hate what saints continue to love. They never know how they shall feel in respect to any object, in any future time. Their hearts can put on the appearance of all holy affections at one time ; and at another time put on the appearance af all unholy and selfish affections. As their hearts appear better at one time, than at another ; so they are very apt to think that they are better than they are. For though their affections vary so often, yet they never alter their nature ; though they are always selfish, yet they often appear disinterested ; and though they are always enmity to God, yet they appear very often to be friendly to God and to all other beings. This mutability of their hearts renders them deceitful above all things. And this deceitfulness of their hearts is that, which renders it so extremely difficult for them to know, that they are totally and desperately wicked.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, that there is but one way for men to know their own hearts. They cannot know them from the mere consciousness of having free, voluntary exercises. All men good and bad are conscious of what passes in their own minds.—When they love or hate, choose or refuse, they are conscious of having these exercises of heart, whether they are or are not conscious of the moral nature of them. Nor can they know whether their moral exercises are right or wrong, good or evil, merely from knowing that they have all the various species of affections, which are common to mankind in general: such as love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, submission, patience and confidence. All men exercise love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, submission, patience and confidence, at certain times and under certain circumstances. This variety of affections forms no essential distinction between saints and sinners, and therefore affords no criterion, by which men may determine whether their hearts are good or evil. Nor can they determine this point by merely having the same species of religious affections, which are common to good and bad men. Sinners may love God, or love Christ, or love heaven, as well as love any other objects; and they may exercise every species of religious affections, that saints exercise. Sinners may counterfeit every religious exercise. How is it possible, then, you will ask, for men to know whether their religious exercises are true or false? There is one way and but one, to determine this great point; and that is, to inquire why they love or hate, rejoice or mourn, hope or fear, or why they exercise submission, patience, and confidence

If you love God, inquire why you love him. If you love Christ, inquire why you love him. If you love heaven, inquire why you love that glorious place. If you exercise submission, inquire why you exercise it. If you exercise patience, inquire why you exercise it. If you exercise confidence, inquire why you exercise it. If you love God for what he is in himself, or on account of his intrinsic and supreme excellence ; you have true love to him, which is essentially different from the love that sinners ever exercise towards God. For they love him only for his love to themselves. If you love Christ for the supreme excellence of his divine nature and holy conduct, you have true love to him, which is essentially different from the mercenary love of sinners. If you love heaven, because it is a holy as well as happy place, your love is holy, and essentially different from the selfish love of sinners in desiring heaven only as a place of happiness. If you exercise submission to God, because you choose that he should dispose of you for his own glory, through every period of your existence, you exercise true submission, which is essentially different from the submission of sinners, in case they know or believe that he will certainly save them. If you exercise patience, because you are willing that God should afflict you as long as he sees best to afflict you, you exercise true patience, which is essentially different from the patience, which arises from mere necessity, which is all the patience that sinners ever exercise. If you trust in God, because you choose to trust in him, rather than trust in yourselves, or in any of your fellow creatures, you place a confidence in him, which sinners durst not to do. Thus all men may know their own hearts, notwithstanding their extreme mutability

and deceitfulness. If they love God's true character, they will love him under all circumstances. If they love Christ's true character they will love him under all circumstances. If they love heaven for its holiness they will love it under all circumstances. But if they do not love these objects on account of their intrinsic excellence, they will love them in one situation and hate them in another; which will prove that they have not the love of God in them, and are entirely destitute of any holy affections.

2. We learn from what has been said, that saints may more easily ascertain their true character, than sinners can theirs. Though both have the same rule, by which to try their own hearts, and both are able to apply it; yet sinners are unwilling to apply it: and it is their unwillingness to apply it, that renders it so very difficult for them to know the truth respecting their hearts. But this difficulty is in a degree removed from saints. They sincerely desire to know their own hearts; and they are willing to take the only proper way to discover their true character. They pray God to search and try them; and they are, in some measure, willing to search and try themselves, by impartially inquiring why they think they love God and cordially embrace the gospel; and as they are conscious of both right and wrong affections, they are much more capable of discerning the difference between holy and unholy, or between selfish and disinterested exercises of heart. They know what it is to love God for what he is in himself, and what it is to love him merely for his favors. Of course, they are able to compare their right with their wrong affections and to discover the essential difference between them. Abraham knew

the difference between loving God for what he is in himself and loving him merely for his favors. Moses knew the difference between loving God for what he is in himself and loving him merely for his favors.—And Job knew the difference between loving God for what he is in himself and loving him merely for his favors. Accordingly, these good men stood the test of change of circumstances. They loved God as really when he frowned, as when he smiled, when he removed, as when he bestowed favors. They knew why they loved God and why God loved them. But sinners have only selfish affections and know not by experience, the difference between selfish and disinterested affections. And when their selfish affections put on the appearance of disinterested affections, they are deceived through the deceitfulness of sin. But they are under no natural necessity of being deceived.—They know enough in speculation, to distinguish selfishness from benevolence. If they are deceived, they are deceived through their own fault and because they choose to deceive themselves. It is a deceived heart, which has turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

3. It appears from what has been said, that all the changes, that mankind meet with in the course of life, are trials of the heart. Their circumstances are continually changing from evil to good, from adversity to prosperity and from prosperity to adversity. And every change they experience is a trial of the heart. All will allow, that a change from prosperity to adversity, is a trial; and a change from great prosperity to great adversity, is a great trial. But a change from adversity to prosperity, is as real a trial, as a change from pros-

perity to adversity ; and a change from great adversity to great prosperity, is a great trial. The reason, why such changes are trials, is because they have a natural tendency to draw forth the affections of the heart, whether they are holy or unholy, friendly or unfriendly to God, who is concerned in every change that takes place. Prosperity is as great a trial of the heart as adversity. Mankind are as naturally disposed to abuse the smiles, as the frowns of divine providence.— They much oftener do overlook and disregard the hand of God in his favors, than in his frowns. God means to try men's hearts, by all the changes which he causes them to experience. God meant to try Pharoah's heart, by inflicting and removing judgments ; and it is worthy of remark, that the respite he gave him between removing and inflicting judgments, had the greatest tendency to harden his heart. God meant to try Abraham, by giving and threatening to take away his beloved son Isaac. God meant to try Job, both by changing his circumstances from prosperity to adversity, and from adversity to prosperity again. These changes, in respect to these men, produced the effects designed. The changes, which Pharoah experienced, tried his heart and proved it to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, because it changed with every change of circumstances. The changes, which Abraham and Job experienced tried their hearts and proved them to be right with God, because they remained the same under entirely different circumstances.--- All changes try men's hearts, because they prove whether they love God because he is good, or only because he is good to them ; and whether they love their fellow men because they are friends to God, or only

because they are friends to them. In a word, all changes in men's circumstances, whether great or small, whether from prosperity to adversity, or from adversity to prosperity, try their hearts and give them opportunity every day to know whether they are in a state of nature or in a state of grace.

4. It appears from the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart, that it is not strange that religious apostacy has prevailed so much in the world. Apostacy from the true religion soon began after the apostacy of Adam. The first instance was in his family.---Cain was an apostate from the true religion. It continued to spread and prevail from that time until the earth was filled with error and violence. After the true religion was revived by the second father of mankind, all the branches of his family soon fell into idolatry, except Abraham. Though the true religion was preferred in his family, yet some branches of it apostatized and symbolized with an idolatrous world. Notwithstanding the strong bulwarks God placed around his people in Judea; yet they were perpetually apostatizing, until ten tribes at once forsook the true God and true religion and gave themselves up to the grossest errors and delusions. While the apostles were living, the mystery of iniquity began to work and many individual professors of christianity made shipwreck of their faith and turned apostates. Soon after, whole churches apostatized and openly professed and maintained idolatry. And ever since that day, men have been apostatizing from christianity to Mahometanism, arianism, socinianism, unitarianism, deism, and scepticism. So long as the hearts of men are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,

there can be no dependance upon the mere profession of the true religion. A mere change of circumstances may lead them to apostatize from the doctrines, the duties and the belief of the true religion. Any errors are more agreeable to the natural heart, than the doctrines and spirit of true religion. It is not strange that men are so easily seduced to apostatize ; for all seducers are of the world and speak of the world and therefore the world heareth them. It is not strange that there are so many apostacies in our churches, at the present day. Many of them have been composed of those, who never experienced a change of heart, nor professed to experience such a change ; and all such professors are prepared to apostatize, when apostate teachers creep in among them. The apostle, speaking of apostates, represents them as acting according to their nature. " It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his vomit again ; and the sow, that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." The heart that is desperately and incurably evil, will lead men to pursue evil to their own death.

5. It appears from what has been said, that those are unwise, who trust in their own hearts. Solomon does not hesitate to pronounce him a fool, who trusts in his own heart. Since the hearts of men are so extremely wicked and deceitful, they must be extremely unwise to trust them ; especially since they have so often been deceived by them. But though they have found their hearts to be wicked and deceitful above all

things, they will still trust in their goodness. They imagine that their hearts are so good, that they shall never embrace an error which they have disbelieved; and never pursue an evil practice, which they have avoided and abhorred. But how many have renounced doctrines, which they once believed, and embraced errors, which they once disbelieved and avoided? How many have pursued pernicious practices, which they once avoided and detested? You can scarcely find an errorist in this land, who did not once believe the truth and abhor the errors he has embraced. Most of the false teachers once believed the bible and the doctrines contained in it to be true, and the sentiments they propagate to be false. Most of those, who embrace their errors, once disbelieved and rejected them. The greatest corrupters of morals were once moral and abhorred the evil ways they are now pursuing. Such seducers and corrupters have become what they are, by trusting in their own hearts. And all, who trust in their own hearts, are exposed to be led astray by the current of error and corruption. But every sinner is ready to think and say as Hazael did, when the prophet foretold his folly and his fate. "What! am I a dog, that I should do such things?" But God knows the hearts of sinners better than they do themselves. He tells them that their hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He commands them to keep their hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. And he forbids them to deceive themselves, or to be deceived by others.

6. We learn from what has been said, that sinners are never under genuine convictions, until they see the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of their hearts.

There is a very great difference between awakenings and convictions. Sinners are often awakened to see their danger, while they are entirely ignorant of the plague of their own hearts, or that incorrigible obstinacy, which is incurable and desperate and which no means, nor moral motives will remove. Accordingly, we find awakened sinners anxiously inquiring what they shall do in order to obtain regenerating grace. They think their hearts are already so good, that they are willing to do all that is reasonable for them to do in their present situation. They are willing to read and pray, seek and strive, to enter into the strait gate, which is all they suppose God can reasonably require. And they have courage to seek and strive, because they imagine they are sincerely doing their duty and their hearts are growing better; for they have stronger and stronger desires to be saved. But when the Spirit of God sets home the commandment upon their hearts, which requires disinterested love and forbids all selfish views, desires and exercises, they are convinced, that all their seekings and strivings, hopes and fears, have been entirely selfish and sinful; and instead of recommending them to God, have only exposed them to his higher displeasure. Then sin revives and their hopes die. Then they see that their selfish hearts have deceived them and that their selfishness is desperate and incurable. They despair of men and means. They realize, that they are out of the reach of all secondary causes and that they are entirely in the sovereign hand of God, who alone is able to save or destroy, and who will either save them, or leave them to perish with their eyes wide open. They are not prepared to see and feel the grace of God in renewing their hearts

and breaking the cords of their iniquity, until they have such genuine convictions of the nature and criminality of their selfish hearts. But sinners under mere awakenings are in the most dangerous situation. It is then their hearts become deceitful above all things and powerfully persuade them, that they are not so guilty as others, and that God will hear their cries for mercy and graciously pardon and save them, because they have become better than they once were, and better than others now are. It is always owing to the deceitfulness and blindness of the heart, that sinners ever gain and cherish a false hope. Hence,

7. There is a plain reason, why saints are more concerned about sinners, than they are about themselves. Saints know that sinners carry about with them hearts full of selfishness and deception, which will lull them into stupidity and security, and dispose them to resist awakenings and convictions and all means used with them to awaken and convince them. They know that they will reform and relapse, resolve and re-resolve and still trust in their own hearts and endeavor by some means or other to establish their own righteousness. It was such a view of the desperate depravity and deception of the human heart, that excited the deep concern of Paul for the sinners in his day. He says, "Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Saints fear, that sinners never will be awakened; and if they are awakened, that they never

will be convinced; and if they are convinced, that they never will be converted. They know that while they continue under the entire dominion of a heart full of selfishness and deception, they will love to deceive themselves and to be deceived and will resist every thing that is said to them, or done for them to undeceive them. Though, at one time and another, they may put on promising appearances, by the occasion of change of circumstances, yet they know not what they may be, or what they may do in time to come. For there is no deception, in respect to sentiment or practice, that they are not liable to believe and pursue. They see their feet stand on slippery places, and are fearful they will soon slide into destruction. In this light, they view sober, regular sinners; and in this light, they view the vain, trifling and profane. And it would be well, indeed, if christians were more concerned about sinners than they are; and they would be more concerned about them, if they were more concerned about themselves. Let all search and try their hearts; for it is vain to try to conceal them. God says he knows them. "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

SERMON XIV.

GOD KNOWS THE HEARTS OF SINNERS.

1. John, iii. 20.---*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

Since there is an essential distinction between saints and sinners, it is of great importance that both should know their peculiar character. Saints are those, who have been born of God and are the children of God; but sinners are those, who have not been born of God, and are under the entire dominion of an unholy heart. In order, therefore, that saints may know that they are saints, and that sinners may know that they are sinners, the apostle describes the peculiar character and conduct of saints, and the peculiar character and conduct of sinners in a very plain and intelligible manner. And then he tells them that they both may know whether they have been born of God and are the children of God, or not, by the description he has given of saints and sinners. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. But if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."—The plain meaning of the apostle is this. If those, who call themselves christians, are conscious of having such exercises of heart as belong to the christian character, they may know that they are the children of God; but if they are conscious of having directly con-

trary affections of heart, they may know that they are not the children of God, but are in the state of nature, and dead in sin. For if their conscience condemn them, God, who knoweth all things, does certainly condemn them as graceless sinners. This amounts to saying,

That God knows the hearts of sinners better than they do themselves.

Sinners know something about their own hearts, otherwise they would never feel self-condemned; but they do not know so much about them, as they might know: for they endeavor to misinform, or silence conscience, which would, if properly consulted and allowed to speak, condemn them for every evil imagination of their evil hearts. Conscience always judges of the moral exercises of the heart according to evidence.—This sinners know, and therefore to prevent its bringing in a verdict against them, they either misinform it, or neglect to consult it. Open, profligate, hardened sinners restrain conscience from speaking, and stifle all sense of remorse and self-condemnation. Moral sinners take a different course, and endeavor to pacify conscience, by their amiable conduct and sophistical reasoning, as Paul did before his conversion. He made his conscience believe, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus; and that he was doing God service, while he was persecuting the Church of Christ. By some such means as these, sinners try to live in ignorance of their own hearts; and all secure sinners generally attain their object. Though it is true, that their hearts sometimes condemn them, notwithstanding all their efforts to ward off convictions. No sinners, however, whether moral or immoral,

whether secure or awakened, know so much about their own hearts as God does, who is greater than their hearts, and knows all things. For,

1. God has a more extensive view of the exercises of their hearts, than they ever have. "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts." He knows their down-sitting and uprising. He understands their thoughts afar off. He compasses their paths and is acquainted with all their ways. He knows all that passes in their hearts and drops from their lips every moment. They have a multitude of moral exercises, of which they take no notice, while passing through their minds;--- and many of those of which they do take notice, they soon forget. So that when they endeavor to recollect the past exercises of their hearts, it is but a very small number of the whole, that they can possibly remember. Who can recollect all his internal exercises and external actions for days, for weeks, for months, for years past? The minds of men are too weak and feeble to take such an extensive view of their hearts and lives. But God not only sees and marks all the thoughts, words, and actions of every sinner, but remembers them all. This is what all sinners are extremely prone to forget, for which God justly blames them.--- Though they cannot remember all their sins, yet they ought to remember that God remembers them all.--- Hence he complains of them and says---"They do not consider in their hearts, that *I remember all their wickedness.*" But even God could not remember all the wickedness of sinners, if he did not remember all the exercises of their hearts and all the motives of their conduct through every moment of their

lives. If these were all reckoned up, they would amount to an immense multitude, more than the old, or even the young, could enumerate and distinctly comprehend. Though this be not possible with men, yet it is possible with God, who numbers the hairs of our heads and the stars of heaven and calls them by their proper names. It is, therefore, a very serious and interesting truth, which sinners are capable of understanding and remembering that God knows and remembers all the moral exercises of their hearts; and consequently all their wickedness in thought, word, and deed. His knowledge of their hearts is therefore, unspeakably more extensive than their own.

2. God sees all the moral exercises of their hearts at one intuitive and comprehensive view, which is a far more perfect knowledge of them, than they ever have. They gain all the knowledge they have of their hearts gradually and slowly, which renders it extremely imperfect. They cannot trace the whole series of their moral exercises intuitively and spontaneously. The most, that they can do, is to recollect some of the exercises of their hearts, which they have had at different times and under different circumstances. They may possibly recollect some of the moral views and exercises, which they had in childhood, some which they had in youth, some which they had in manhood, and some which they have had in later periods of life. But after all, they cannot recall but a very few of the innumerable thoughts, purposes and affections, which have occupied and gained the attention of their hearts. And even this interrupted and disconnected view of their hearts, they have gained gradually and slowly, which can give them but a very faint and imperfect

knowledge of their whole moral character. But God, who looks not merely on the outward appearance, but on the heart, sees the whole connected train of all their internal views and feelings, as well as external actions. Their thoughts, and of course their intentions, volitions, and actions have run in a train. One thought has led to another thought; one volition to another volition; and one action to another action, through the whole course of their lives. They have never had one solitary unconnected thought, nor one solitary unconnected intention, nor done one solitary unconnected action. A certain, though not always a perceptible connection has run through all their thoughts, intentions, words and actions. God sees all the links in this mental chain, at one intuitive and comprehensive view; and the hearts of sinners, as composed of this combination of moral exercises, appear very different from what they do to sinners themselves, who do not see, or overlook this connection in their thoughts, words, and actions. They are ready to imagine, that they only now and then have an evil thought, or an evil intention or do an evil action. But God sees their whole hearts at once, which are full of evil and nothing but evil; and which produce a constant and connected course of evil conduct. He knows, therefore, a vast deal more about their hearts, than they do themselves.

3. God knows the moral quality of all the exercises, which compose the hearts of sinners, as well as their connection with each other, and with the external actions, which flow from them. This God claims as his peculiar prerogative. "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his

doings." Though sinners have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be; though all the exercises of their hearts are selfish and criminal; and though they have a conscience, which can distinguish the moral quality of all their moral exercises; yet they are extremely ignorant of the entire criminality of their selfish hearts. They are so far from consulting conscience, with respect to the nature of their moral exercises, that they are not willing that it should do its office, but restrain it from distinguishing and condemning their selfish exercises. If they would consult conscience, in respect to the motives of their conduct, it would always tell them that they are selfish and sinful. But as they generally neglect and silence conscience, they generally think, that the most of their moral exercises and motives are good. It is only when they externally neglect what God expressly requires, or externally do what God expressly forbids, that they charge themselves with guilt. At all other times, and in all other cases, they consider themselves as innocent, if not virtuous. Paul lived so; the Pharisee, that went to the temple to pray, lived so; Judas probably lived so, while he followed Christ with his other disciples; and the very worst of sinners generally live so. They think they generally do right; and that they only now and then do wrong and act from selfish and sinful motives. But how different is this view of their hearts and conduct, from that which God has of them. He views all their moral exercises and motives of action, as constantly and perfectly selfish and sinful. He sees every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, as they rise in their minds, to be evil, and only evil continually. He

knows, that they never feel right, nor act right, in a single instance. He knows better than any other being, the essential difference between selfishness and benevolence, virtue and vice, holiness and unholiness. As he always sees all the moral exercises in the hearts of sinners, so he always marks the moral quality of every one of their moral exercises. He never mistakes selfishness for benevolence, nor mere natural affections for holy affections. He knows and condemns all the moral exercises of sinners, as totally selfish and criminal. Sinners always wish to hide their hearts from God and from their own consciences. They imagine they have a thousand good exercises of heart, but God knows they have none. He knows their hearts, therefore, infinitely better than they do themselves.

4. God knows how vile and guilty sinners are, for all the evil exercises of their hearts, which they inwardly cherish and outwardly express. Though their own conscience tells them that they are guilty, and more or less condemns them for their sinful exercises of heart, whether they act them out or not; yet they are far from having a clear and adequate idea of the great criminality and guilt of every evil affection and emotion of their hearts. They view a multitude of their sinful thoughts, words and actions as mere venial evils, which do not hurt, and deserve no blame. They make a mock at what they deem small sins, and blame themselves only for great overt acts of wickedness, which are visible and reproachful in the eyes of the world. They have, perhaps, no sense of guilt for one of a thousand of their internal transgressions.--- But God, who looks directly on their hearts, sees all their vain and sinful thoughts, intentions and designs;

and condemns them all, whether they ever do, or do not express them in their external conduct. The history of every sinner's heart, could it be written, would appear very different from the history of his life. This secret, unwritten history God reads every moment. He views no sins as small, though he views some vastly greater than others. Sin and guilt are inseparably connected; and the greater the sin, the greater is the guilt, or ill-desert attached to it. God is the only being in the universe, who knows how to weigh the sins of men in a perfectly just and even balance, and exactly measure the guilt of every sinful thought, word, and action. He views the least sin as unspeakably more vile and guilty, than sinners do the greatest. He views every selfish exercise of the heart as diametrically opposed to every benevolent exercise of the heart, and as having a direct, or indirect tendency to destroy all good; and therefore as being more criminal, than any created being can conceive. The first selfish affection in the heart of Lucifer had an indirect, if not a direct tendency to produce rebellion in heaven. And we know that the first selfish affection in the human heart did produce the apostacy of the whole human race. None but a being of perfect holiness and perfect knowledge can justly and fully estimate the sinfulness of sin. Sinners are perfectly selfish and love selfishness. God is perfectly benevolent and loves benevolence. He is the only being, who is perfectly disposed and perfectly capable of distinguishing every selfish exercise of heart from every benevolent affection of heart. And as he sees all the exercises in the hearts of sinners to be entirely selfish; so he views their hearts, in respect to

criminality and guilt, infinitely different from what they do themselves. Indeed, he views them more guilty for every one of their sins, than they do for all their sins together.

5. God knows all the evils, which the corrupt hearts of sinners would prompt them to do, if he did not continually restrain them. They are ready to think, that their hearts are no worse than their lives, because they judge of their hearts by their external actions. They are all conscious, that they do not act so bad, as they have natural power and capacity to act. They extenuate the badness of their hearts, by the good things they do, and the evil things they refrain from doing. The moral sinner exults in the thought, that he is not as many others are, but much more harmless and circumspect in the general course of his life. The vicious sinner imagines he has no more corruption of heart, than he discovers by his irregular conduct. Neither of them is disposed, to reflect upon the innumerable evils, which his wicked heart has prompted him to do, and which he would have done, if God had not laid his restraints upon him. We know of some instances, in which God has restrained men from acting out the corruption of their hearts. He restrained Esau from destroying his brother Jacob and his family. He restrained David from imbruing his hands in the blood of Nabal. And he restrained those, from effecting their purpose, who bound themselves by an oath to kill Paul. We have reason to think, that he does in ten thousand instances restrain wicked men from the evils they would do, if he did not internally, or externally restrain them. He knows their thoughts afar off and long before they rise in their hearts ; and he can

in innumerable ways unknown and unperceived by them, alter their purposes, or restrain them from action. Though a man's heart deviseth his way, yet the Lord always directs his steps. But the restraints, which God lays upon the hearts of sinners, do not destroy, nor even diminish the guilt of their sinful thoughts, desires and designs. Sinners appear vastly less guilty to themselves and to the world than they do to God, who searches and tries and condemns all the evil exercises of their hearts, which they would have acted out, if he had not effectually restrained them. How many more great and tremendous calamities would have fallen upon the world, than have fallen upon it, if God had not restrained the selfishness, the pride, the malice and revenge, which has actually existed in the totally depraved hearts of men ; and which has never been acted out, by reason of divine restraints. It is owing to a secret and powerful influence, which God exercises over the minds of moral sinners, that they are not immoral. It is owing to the same kind of divine influence over immoral sinners, that they are not more immoral than they are ; and that they do so many things which are useful to the world, instead of detrimental. Some of the most profane and profligate sinners, as well as some of the most regular and moral sinners, are very instrumental in promoting the safety, the peace and prosperity of the nation to which they belong, and of the country in which they live. But still the hearts of both moral and immoral sinners are full of evil ; and they all pursue one steady, constant, persevering course of sinning. And though they construe all their useful and beneficial conduct into virtue, yet God construes all their manual and mental service into sin. He judges

of their external conduct by their hearts; and not their hearts by their conduct. He knows, that their hearts are fully set in them to do evil and nothing but evil; and that it is owing to his controlling and restraining influence, that they do so much apparent good, and no more apparent evil. He knows what exercises of their hearts he controls and what exercises of their hearts he restrains; and he knows that all the exercises he controls and all that he restrains are entirely selfish and sinful. He views their hearts, therefore, as infinitely more sinful and odious than they view them. I may add,

6. God knows the extreme obstinacy of their hearts, which they are unwilling to know, and of which they are generally very ignorant. God knows how often and how much they have refused to obey his commands, his gracious invitations, his kind admonitions, and his awful threatenings. God knows how often and how much they have resisted the strivings of his Spirit. God knows how often and how much they have despised and abused the light and instruction, which has been poured into their minds, by the preaching of the gospel. And he knows how often and how much they have disregarded parental authority, instruction, and restraint. There is nothing, that serves so much to harden their hearts and aggravate their guilt, as their abuse of such various and powerful means, as God uses to bring them to repentance.—Christ said of the Jews, who disregarded and rejected the light and instruction which he gave them, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works, which none other

man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father." And again he said, " This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." God said of the sinners in Zion, " They are stout hearted, and far from righteousness. They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts sent by his prophets." Though sinners forget, yet God remembers and knows all the light they have refused to see, all the instructions they have refused to hear, all the strivings of the Spirit, which they have resisted, and every thing, which has served to harden their hearts and aggravate their guilt. God keeps his eye constantly fixed on the hearts of sinners, and observes all their feelings and conduct under the light of the gospel, the dispensations of providence, and the common and special influences of his Spirit, and marks all the degrees of their obstinacy and guilt. How infinitely different then, must their hearts appear in his sight from what they do in their own ? They never see all their sins in their number, in their nature, in their tendency, and in their great and innumerable aggravations. Though they know, that their hearts sometimes condemn them ; yet they refuse to know that God, who perfectly knows their hearts at all times and in all respects, always condemns them.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. In the view of this subject, we may see why sinners generally live so little concerned about their guilty and

dangerous state by nature. Though their conscience sometimes awakens their attention to their hearts, which condemn them; yet they soon stifle the voice of conscience and recover their habitual peace and tranquility of mind. They either bribe conscience by their good deeds, or sear it by their bad ones; and in either case, they flatter themselves, that their hearts are pretty good, if not so good as they ought to be.—But if they only saw their hearts as God sees them, they would be instantly alarmed and all their peace and flattering hopes would forsake them. The truth of the case is, they do not view all the exercises of their hearts as either selfish, or criminal. They do not believe, that their hearts are totally depraved and entirely selfish and criminal, and that all their actions flow from selfish and sinful motives. They have a better opinion of themselves than to think, that all their desires and designs are mean and mercenary. They have made themselves to believe, that they generally act from innocent and laudable motives. They have no thought, that the common exercises of their hearts are altogether selfish; that they neither fear God, nor regard man in their common labors and pursuits; and that it is real selfishness to seek their own private, personal, separate interest, unless they positively injure their neighbor or somebody else. They see no harm in mere selfishness, or seeking their own happiness solely and supremely, without regard to the glory of God and the good of mankind. If they labor six days in the week and rest on the sabbath from their own service and the service of God, they think they are very innocent; or if they attend public worship to gratify their curiosity, or to be seen of men, they think

they are quite virtuous, and praiseworthy. So long as they can thus keep themselves ignorant of the entire selfishness and criminality of their hearts, they can maintain their carnal ease and security, and disregard all God knows and has told them in his word, concerning their criminality and danger. It seems strange, indeed, that they can live in so much ignorance of the depravity of their own hearts, which, if they would attend to it, would continually condemn them; but it is not strange, that they should be thoughtless and unconcerned about their danger and guilt, while they feel no guilt and see no danger. They employ the very means, which God uses to awaken them, to stupify their conscience and harden their hearts. They misimprove and abuse the goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God, which ought to lead them to repentance. They misemploy their rational powers and faculties, in misconstruing and perverting the great truths of the gospel. They shut their eyes, stop their ears and harden their hearts against the most solemn warnings and admonitions of providence. They say to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "They say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." They love darkness rather than light; and their way is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble. They say they shall have peace, though they walk in the imaginations of their hearts. The ways of their hearts appear safe as well as pleasant. It is the ignorance of their own hearts, that keeps so many totally depraved and guilty sinners in a state of ease, security and presumption. And until

this ignorance is by some means removed, nothing can prevent their running in the broad road to destruction.

2. This subject shows us why awakened sinners are often in so much anxiety and distress about the salvation of their souls. It is because they begin to see their hearts in the same light, in which God sees them and represents them in his word. He has told them, that they are by nature dead in trespasses and sin; that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart, is evil and only evil continually; that their hearts are full of evil and fully set in them to do evil; that they are of their father the devil, possess his spirit and are under his influence; that there is none righteous among them, no, not one; that they have all gone out of the way and become unprofitable; and that they have always been enemies to all righteousness. This description of their hearts they find to be true, when their conscience is awakened and their eyes are opened, to see the selfishness and criminality of all their voluntary exercises and actions. Such a conviction of the total corruption of their hearts and sinfulness of their lives, fills their souls with extreme anguish and distress. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" God is able to make the most stout-hearted stoop under a clear view of their total depravity and guilt; and he has often done it. He gave this conviction to three thousand one day and to five thousand another. Paul, who was alive without the law once, found himself dead in trespasses and sins. Simon, the sorcerer, who was thought to be, and who thought himself to be, the great power of God, was thrown into the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, by the bare words of Peter.---

When the divine Spirit opens the eyes of sinners to see their own hearts in a true light, they find that they are as selfish and sinful as God has represented them to be; and that all their efforts to get out of the hands of divine sovereignty are vain and hopeless. They find themselves bound over to eternal destruction, by their carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They find, that nothing can slay the enmity of their hearts and break the cords of their iniquity, but the irresistible grace of God, who has a right and power to save, or destroy them. Many have found themselves in this helpless and hopeless condition and anxiously cried, "What must we do to be saved." And all sinners will sooner or later find, that the condemnation of their hearts will fill them with insupportable consternation and guilt. Though they are now pleased with their hearts and rejoice, that they are able to guard them against the arrows of conviction, which are often pointed at them; yet the time will come, when they must see them as God sees them and know that God sees them; and when that time comes, all their false confidence, false joy and false hopes will perish and draw after them a load of guilt, sufficient to sink them in temporary, if not in eternal sorrow. This danger is not visionary. It has been seen and felt. And it may be seen and felt here, by those, who most ardently wish to put far away what they deem an evil day. But it would be a great mercy if God would soon bow the heavens and come down and appear in his glory, in awakening the consciences and subduing the hearts of sinners in this place. It seems as though it were time for God to take his own work into his own hands and

plead his own cause, when so many make void his law.

3. This subject shows why sinners are so ready to believe, that God will not make them, nor any others of mankind forever miserable. They all think what some say and teach, that no sinners deserve eternal punishment. The reason is, that they have never seen their own hearts in the same light, in which God has seen them. They have never believed, that their hearts are totally depraved and that they have never had a good desire, a good design, nor done one good action ; that they have never done any thing but sin ever since they were capable of sinning ; that their whole lives have been one continual series of transgressions, in thought, word, and deed ; that the reason, why they have not done a thousand times more evil than they have done, is because God has restrained them ; and that they never intend to cease sinning as long as they live and as long as they exist, notwithstanding all the precepts, prohibitions, invitations, admonitions and threatenings God has given them. If they viewed their hearts and lives in this light, would they not think that they deserved to be punished and to be punished forever ? Those, who have seen their hearts and lives in this light, have believed and felt, that they deserved to be punished, and that forever. And the same persons believe, that other sinners have the same totally depraved hearts that they have had, and that they have lived the same totally sinful lives, that they have lived and therefore deserve to be punished not only in time, but to all eternity. The only reason, then, why impenitent sinners are so ready to believe that God will not make them or any of mankind forever miserable, is because they have never seen the plague of their own

hearts, in that true light, in which God sees them and they might and will sooner or later see them. Let any sinner see his own heart in a true light and be fully convinced, that it has been and still is fully set in him to do evil and nothing but evil, as long as he lives and as long as he exists; and he will be ready to pass judgment upon himself, that he deserves to feel the weight of God's displeasure and of the displeasure of all holy beings forever. If sinners did but see and feel the total depravity and enmity of their hearts, they would tremble like Belshazzar in the belief and fear of future and eternal misery.

4. It appears from what has been said, that it is of great importance to preach the doctrine of total depravity plainly and fully. It carries no conviction to sinners to be told, that they are the offspring of Adam, are by nature depraved, and have actually sinned and come short of the glory of God. They are willing to believe and allow this; but then they are ready to think and say this is true of the best men in the world. They are all the offspring of Adam, they are by nature depraved and they actually sin and come short of the glory of God. They are no better than we; and why should God save them and not us? The doctrine of total depravity gives a complete answer. Though the best men are depraved, yet they are not totally depraved. Though they sometimes sin, yet they do not always sin. They do something besides sinning. They love God, which sinners never do. They repent of sin, which sinners never do. They believe in Christ, which sinners never do. They promote the glory of God, which sinners never do. They desire and intend to promote the glory of God, as long as they live and

as long as they exist. Though they are like sinners, yet they are essentially different from them. They are not totally depraved, but sinners are. They are not total enemies to God, but sinners are. They are not totally unfit for the services and enjoyments of heaven, but sinners are. And they are not properly fit for destruction, but sinners, in respect to guilt, enmity and opposition to God and all good, are completely fit for spiritual and eternal death. As there is this essential distinction between saints and sinners, it is of great importance, that it should be made to appear to both. But nothing can make it appear, but the truth of the total depravity of sinners. Unless preachers clearly and fully prove this truth, it is impossible for them to prove, that there is an essential distinction between saints and sinners. Those, therefore, who deny, or neglect to preach total depravity never do teach their hearers, that sinners are essentially different from saints. Though they use the terms saints and sinners, yet they seldom attempt to tell wherein they differ ; and when they undertake to describe the difference, they only say that saints are better than sinners, or that sinners do more evil than good, but saints do more good than evil. Accordingly, when they speak of regeneration, which they seldom do, they call it a gradual, and not an instantaneous change. They suppose sinners have some goodness, but saints have more ; which leaves both saints and sinners in a state of uncertainty whether they are saints or sinners, the friends or enemies of God ; and they must remain in this uncertainty as long as they live, for they cannot tell, nor any one else, how much goodness they must have to constitute them saints and entitle them to the great and precious prom-

ises of the gospel. The doctrine of total depravity is one of the most essential doctrines of christianity.--- The gospel cannot be clearly and consistently preached, either theoretically, or practically to sinners, or to saints, without plainly explaining and proving the total depravity of sinners.

5. It appears from what has been said, that no sinners have a right to think they are christians. They all have the witness within themselves, that they are totally depraved and graceless. Christ has told them, that they have not the love of God in them ; and the apostle has told them, that they have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. That this is true, all their moral exercises of heart, ever since they had any, unitedly prove. And if they would only look into their hearts and view them as God views them, they could no more doubt of their total depravity and graceless state, than they could doubt of their own existence. Their moral exercises are essential parts of their existence, as much as their reason and conscience ; and they can know as much about them, as they know about any of their natural faculties. As they know what their reason and conscience are, so they know what the free and the voluntary exercises of their hearts are. And as they are conscious, when they reflect upon their past and present exercises of heart, that they have always loved themselves supremely and not God ; that they have always sought their own interests and not the interests of others ; that they have always desired happiness more than holiness ; that they have always sought to please themselves rather than to please God ; and that they have always disliked, if not opposed, the di-

vine commands and the terms of the gospel. And the consciousness of such a constant, uninterrupted and persevering train of selfish and sinful affections, gives them plain, sensible, irresistible evidence, that they are in the state of nature and under the dominion of a totally selfish, wicked heart. This consciousness of self-condemnation the apostle represents as the infallible criterion, by which sinners may know that they are totally depraved, absolutely graceless and essentially different from the children of God. He declares, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." That is, he cannot sin constantly as sinners do. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God." That is, whosoever never does righteousness, but always sins as sinners do. And again he says, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. But if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." Here the apostle asserts, that all sinners may know that they are so, by the infallible testimony of their own heart. If their heart condemn them they may assure themselves, that God who knows all things and is perfectly acquainted with all the inward motions and affections of their hearts, knows and condemns them as totally sinful and graceless. No sinners, therefore, let them be ever so apparently amiable and virtuous, have a right to think they are christians, nor to doubt whether they are dead in trespasses and sins. There are a great many professedly doubt-

ing sinners, but they have no just ground to doubt. The case is clear in God's view; and ought to be in their own. Let them impartially ask their hearts and they will tell them the truth, and justly condemn them for all their internal exercises and external actions.

6. It equally appears from what has been said, that christians have no right to think that they are sinners. Though they have been totally depraved, yet they are not now totally depraved. Though they have not yet attained, neither are already perfect; yet they desire to be perfect and free from sin. Though, when they would do good, evil is present with them, and they often fail of that perfect obedience to the will of God, which they are conscious they habitually desire to perform, yet they have the witness in themselves, that their hearts have been changed, and that whereas they were once blind, they now see; as they once hated God, they now love him; as they once disobeyed God, they now obey him; as they once loved their own interest more than his glory, they now seek his glory more than their own temporal, or eternal good. Such holy exercises all real christians have; and these are the only criterion by which they are to assure themselves that they are of God, are his children and heirs of eternal life. They have no right to disbelieve the witness, which God has given them in their hearts and set up another standard to try their spiritual state. Their own standard will always lead them astray; and they will refuse to be comforted in the way God has appointed to give them comfort. God gives every christian evidence enough, that he is born of the Spirit, if he would only seriously and impartially attend to it. This is true, at the time he becomes a new creat-

ure, and ever afterwards. No christians, therefore, have a right to think they are sinners, and have no title to the great and precious promises of the gospel. They ought to go on their way rejoicing in God, in prosperity and adversity; and even under the hiding of God's face. He requires them to rejoice in himself, always and evermore. Christians are always to blame, if they think they are not the children of God.

Finally, in the view of this subject, all are called upon to judge righteous judgment with respect to their own hearts. The only criterion has been exhibited. It is the criterion proposed by the beloved disciple John, who tenderly and sincerely wished, that both saints and sinners might know their own hearts. And if all, who are now present, would apply the criterion, which the apostle has given them, there would not go away from this house one doubting christian, nor one doubting sinner.

SERMON XV.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD BINDS MEN TO BE HOLY.

I. PETER, I. 16.—*Because it is written, Be ye holy ; for I am holy.*

This epistle is addressed to christians in general ; and therefore its precepts and exhortations may be justly considered as applicable to christians in every age, as well as in every part of the world. It becomes christians now, as much as ever it did, to be holy in all manner of conversation, for the reason which the apostle assigns in the text. "Because it is written, Be ye holy ; for I am holy." We find this written in Leviticus XI. 44, where God says to his people "I am the Lord your God : ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves ; and ye shall be holy, for I am holy." The same sentiment is expressed in several other passages in the Old Testament. But since all men are equally the creatures of God and equally need his favor, this text equally applies to all men of all ages, characters and conditions ; and equally proves the duty and necessity of one man's being holy as well as another. For if the holiness of God be a reason why one man should be holy, it is as good a reason why every man should be holy. The creator's holiness lays all mankind under a moral obligation and necessity of being conformed to his moral image. Therefore, we may understand God as saying to all men, without distinction, "Be ye holy ; for I am holy." Taking the words in this extensive sense, they suggest this important truth ;

That God's being holy renders it absolutely necessary that men should be holy. I shall,

I. Show in what holiness consists;

II. Show that God is holy; And,

III. That this renders it absolutely necessary, that men should be holy.

I. We are to consider in what holiness consists.

Holiness is a general term to express that goodness, or benevolence, which comprises every thing, that is morally amiable and excellent. So that holiness properly means that love to God and man, which the divine law requires and all the moral exercises and affections, that flow from it. Universal benevolence leads the subject of it to regard all beings according to their apparent worth and importance; and to seek their good according to the rank they hold in the scale of existence. This disposition will incline any being to treat himself and every other being perfectly right. For true benevolence is, in its own nature, universal, disinterested and impartial; and leads those, who possess it, to seek the highest good of the universe at large, whether this general good will involve their own good, or the good of other individuals, or not. Holiness, which essentially consists in pure love, lies not in the understanding, conscience, or any intellectual power or faculty, but in the heart, which is the seat of moral perfection in every moral agent. And this holiness of heart stands diametrically opposed to selfishness, which is the essence of all moral evil.

Having concisely stated the nature of holiness, I proceed to show,

II. That God is holy. The scripture every where ascribes holiness to the Deity. It calls him the *Holy*

One, more than twenty times ; and the *Holy One of Israel*, more than thirty times. It represents the church on earth as saying, " Who is like thee, O Lord among the gods ! who is like thee, glorious in holiness !" And it represents all the heavenly world as crying with joy, " Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." The scripture not only gives the epithet of holy to God, but represents his whole moral character as consisting in that pure love, or universal benevolence, which is the sum and comprehension of all holiness. We read, " God is love." That is, his whole moral excellence consists in love. We read, " God is good unto all and his tender mercies are over all his works." That is, his love is universal. We read, " He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." That is, his love is impartial. We are told that when Moses requested God to shew him his glory, he answered, " I will make all my goodness pass before thee." And accordingly, The Lord passed before him and proclaimed himself, " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Here God represents his goodness or universal benevolence, as his supreme glory and comprehensive of all his moral perfections, such as truth, justice, mercy, and grace. Thus God is perfectly holy in heart ; and this perfect holiness of heart renders all his character and conduct supremely holy. Here it may be proper to enter into particulars and observe,

1. God is holy in all his natural attributes. These are under the direction of his holy heart and always

exercised in a holy manner. The almighty power of God is a natural attribute. But this is holy. He never exerts, this attribute, but in a holy manner, or to answer some holy and benevolent purpose. Hence his omnipotence is represented as an holy omnipotence. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." The wisdom of God is one of his natural attributes, by which he is capable of forming the best designs and devising the best means of accomplishing them. This natural perfection is always under the influence of perfect holiness; and is never exercised to form any other but holy and benevolent purposes. It is said, "He is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Job demands, "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? Elihu says, "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity." The perfect holiness of God governs his unerring wisdom and disposes him to devise and adopt none but perfectly holy, just and benevolent designs, which render his wisdom a perfectly holy wisdom. And for the same reason, his sovereignty is a holy sovereignty. Though he has a natural right to do what he will with his own; yet his perfect holiness renders it morally impossible for him to exercise his sovereignty, in a manner contrary to the eternal rule of right. The Sovereign of the universe, who is perfectly holy, cannot do wrong.--- Though he may have mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he may destroy; yet in forming the vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, he exercises no other but a holy and benevolent sovereignty.

Thus all the natural perfections of God are glorious in holiness.

2. God is holy in all his purposes, as well as in all his essential attributes. He designed from eternity to exert and display all the perfections of his nature. It was the benevolence of the Deity, which prompted him to form any designs and to pursue any course of external conduct. The great plan, which he formed before the foundation of the world, is a scheme of perfect holiness; and designed to promote the largest measure of holiness in the universe, that infinite wisdom and power can produce. All his designs, strictly speaking, are only so many constituent parts, or branches of his one great design. They all centre in the highest good of the intelligent universe. And this renders every one of his designs, as really holy as another. They all originate in holiness and tend to promote it.

3. God is holy in his word; which is an expression of his holy heart, from beginning to end. All his commands are holy, just and good and expressive of his love to holiness. His laws require nothing but holiness of mankind and forbid nothing but what is unholy and sinful. His promises are all holy and designed to manifest his cordial approbation of the holy affections of his dutiful creatures. All his threatenings are also holy; and designed to reveal his holy displeasure and wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God has said nothing in his word, but what flowed from a holy heart and tends to promote some holy purpose. The whole word of God is perfectly holy and adapted to promote holiness in the hearts and lives of all to whom it is given. Accordingly, Christ in his prayer to his Father for his disciples, said,

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And with this agree the declarations of David. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether."

4. God is holy in all his works. So says the psalmist. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works." The works of the Lord are great and numerous and wonderful; and all the fruits and effects of his holiness. God was holy in creating the heavens and the earth and in forming angels and men. He was holy in calling into existence every created object. His holiness was as really concerned and displayed in creating things without holiness and without life, as in creating those, which possess both. He created just so many creatures of just such a nature, of just such a size and of just such a duration, as would best subserve the purposes of his holiness. He made every thing in weight and in measure and holiness determined what these should be.—He made nothing to no purpose and nothing to an ill purpose. He had a holy, benevolent and important purpose in every thing he made. And though all things, that he has made, are not holy, yet he is holy in making all things.

This leads me to observe further, that God is holy in governing whatever he has made. He upholds and directs all things by his constant and powerful agency. He causes the regular succession of day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest. He hears the

young ravens when they cry and satisfies the desires and supplies the wants of every living creature. He fixes the bounds of every one's habitation and orders all the circumstances of human life. In a word, he exercises a universal providence over all his works. And he is holy, as well as wise and powerful, in his universal government. As the work of redemption is the most glorious and important of all his works, so he displays the most holiness in carrying it on. To this work he makes all his other works subservient. For the sake of bringing home many sons unto glory and making them perfectly holy, he has given his Son to suffer and die on the cross; published the gospel of his grace; appointed man to preach it; and set apart a day to hear it; while at the same time, he operates on the human heart, to produce the effect he designs. He opens the hearts of some to receive it, and shuts the hearts of others against it. And in doing all this, he acts from the same holy and benevolent design, which he had in view, in forming the great scheme of redemption and in choosing the subjects of his grace, from the early days of eternity. His holy heart governs all his conduct, in the works of creation, providence and grace. Thus he is perfectly and universally holy, in all his affections, in all his attributes, in all his laws, and in all his works. It now remains to show,

III. That since God is holy, it highly concerns men to be holy. This is the reason he gives for commanding them to be holy. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The perfect holiness of the Deity lays all mankind under a moral obligation and necessity of being conformed to his holy and amiable character. This will appear from various considerations.

1. It is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to discover the supreme excellence and glory of an holy God. Holiness is the supreme glory and perfection of the Deity ; but without holiness no man can see his supreme beauty and moral excellence. It is impossible, that those, who are wholly destitute of every holy and benevolent feeling, should know how a holy and benevolent being feels. This is the general representation of scripture. Our Lord says, " Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God." The apostle John says, " He that loveth not knoweth not God ; for God is love." And the apostle Paul says on the one hand, " The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. And on the other hand he says, " Those, who are rooted and grounded in love, are able to comprehend, with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Men must possess real holiness, in order to see the beauty of holiness in the divine character. But as soon as they become holy as God is holy, they can discern the beauty and glory of divine holiness. " For love is of God ; and every one, that loveth, is born of God and knoweth God." Without such a peculiar knowledge of the only true God, none can inherit eternal life.

2. It is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to obey an holy God. This we are expressly told in his word. " The carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law neither indeed can be." And when the unholy Israelites publicly said,

"We will serve the Lord;" Joshua told them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God." The laws of an holy God are all holy and require holiness and nothing but holiness. Hence Christ represents holy love, or universal benevolence, as comprising all the duty and obedience, which God requires of men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." And the apostle says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law. So long as men are destitute of love, or true holiness, they can do nothing, which is the least obedience to the holy commands of an holy God. Every command of God requires men to feel like himself, or to be holy as he is holy. The reason, why men should love their enemies, bless them that curse them and do good to them that hate them, is, that they may be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect. Obedience always implies conformity of heart to the will of another. All obedience to God, therefore, implies conformity of heart to his holy will expressed in his holy commands. As it is necessary that men should obey their great creator and lawgiver, in order to secure his favor forever; so it is no less necessary, that they should have that holiness of heart, without which it is impossible to please and obey him.

3. It is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to be proper objects of the approbation and complacency of an holy God. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. The prayer of the upright is his delight. He taketh pleasure in them that

fear him ; in them that hope in his mercy." The holiness of the Deity naturally disposes him to take real complacency and delight in all his holy creatures and dutiful subjects. When they unite with him in affection, his heart unites with theirs and he is pleased to say, " I love them that love me." As holiness in men renders them beautiful and amiable in the eyes of him, who is perfectly holy, so unholiness renders them infinitely odious in his sight. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin and cannot look on iniquity. He is angry with the wicked every day. They are the objects of his most holy and perfect aversion. Though they may outwardly appear beautiful in the eyes of men ; yet to the holy and omniscient eye of an holy God they must appear infinitely vile and odious. He, that loves the greatest good of the universe, must hate those, who oppose it. He, that loves pure benevolence, must hate perfect selfishness. He, that loves the holiness of his creatures, must hate those, who hate their holiness.— It therefore appears to be absolutely necessary, that men should be holy, in order to become the objects of the divine complacency and delight. As it is infinitely important, that men should secure the favor of God, which is life and better than life, so it is equally necessary and important, that they should be holy as God is holy and be united to him in the affections of their heart. I must add,

4. That it is absolutely necessary, that men should be holy in order to enjoy an holy God. Since God is holy in all his affections, designs and works, none can enjoy him, without a holy conformity to his character and conduct. We can enjoy no object, that is not pleasing to us. We must take pleasure in the

being, perfections and government of God, in order to enjoy him. And all holy beings do love and enjoy God. David says, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." And again he says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The enjoyment of God is the highest happiness, that a pious and immortal soul can enjoy; and accordingly this is the greatest good, that God has promised to bestow upon those, who feel a filial spirit towards him. "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things: and I will be his God and he shall be my son." Paul tells christians, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Christians enjoy all things in the enjoyment of God. But in order to enjoy all things in God, men must be like him, or holy as he is holy. Hence says the Apostle John; "Behold, now are we sons of God and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Since God is holy, all his purposes and operations are holy. His holiness does, in a manner, sanctify every creature, every object and every event in the universe. So that without holiness, no man can really enjoy any being, or object, in this world, or the next. For God has made all things for himself, and their value and importance consists in being means to promote his glory, which is his supreme and ultimate end in all his works. So that holiness and nothing but holiness can put any of the human race into the en-

joyment of God and all good. Now, if it be necessary that they should see and love and please and enjoy God; then it is absolutely necessary, that they should be holy, because he is holy. It is far more important that men should be holy, than that they should exist; and while they exist, it is far more important that they should be holy, than that they should be happy either in this life, or the life to come.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God be perfectly holy, then the more sinners know of God, the more they will hate him. They are lovers of their own selves. They love their own private, personal interest and happiness, solely and supremely. All their selfish views, and feelings, and pursuits are in direct contrariety to all the holy and benevolent views and feelings of the Deity. There are no two things more directly opposite to each other, than holiness and selfishness. So far, therefore, as sinners, who are perfectly selfish, discover the holiness of God, just so far they hate his character, laws, and government. They are justly called haters of God, and enemies of God. Christ says, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." This, however, they are very unwilling to believe and acknowledge. They are apt to entertain a better opinion of themselves, and especially of their hearts. Though they will not presume to say, that they have never neglected any thing, which God has required, nor done any thing which he has forbidden; yet they are very ready to say, that they have generally meant to do right. But it is owing to their ignorance, or inattention, that they imagine their hearts are better than

their external conduct. God, who knows their thoughts afar off, has told them, "that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil, only evil continually." They are selfish, and consequently as sinful and inimical to God, as they can be with their present views, desires, and pursuits. It is true, indeed, that sometimes God is not in all their thoughts; and sometimes, when they think of him, they view him merely as a benefactor, and love him for his favors. But this is consistent with the total enmity of their hearts towards his true character, when clearly seen and realized. This was fully manifested by the conduct of sinners towards Christ. While they viewed him as their long expected Messiah, and as their deliverer from their national calamities, they followed him in multitudes and sung hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. But when they discovered his holy hatred of their selfish desires and hopes, they became his mortal enemies, and embrued their hands in his blood; by which they gave visible and infallible evidence, that they were irreconcilable enemies to the God of Israel, whom they professed to love. The same selfish spirit reigns in the hearts of all impenitent, unrenewed sinners. They hate God just as much as they love themselves. They hate his holiness just as much as they love their own selfishness. They hate God supremely, for the very reason for which they ought to love him supremely; and that is, for his holiness, and nothing else. When they view him as one altogether like themselves, they feel no enmity towards him; but when they view him as a holy, sin-hating and sin-condemning God, their hearts sensibly rise against him, and they cannot bear the thought

that he should reign over them. They would, if it were in their power, wrest the sceptre from his hand and defeat his designs, or destroy his existence. They feel as Pharoah did, when he said, "I know not the Lord, nor will I obey his voice."

2. If God be perfectly holy, then sinners will hate one part of his character and conduct as really as another, when they become fully acquainted with it. They are very apt to think, that they love some parts of his character and some parts of his conduct, while they perfectly hate some parts of his character and some parts of his conduct. They are willing, that God should be eternal, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient and infinitely wise, if he would employ all these divine perfections in their favor. They have no objections against any of his natural attributes, if he would only be so kind, as to exert them, when and where and how they desire he would exert them. The carnal, selfish Israelites were highly pleased, when God visibly displayed his almighty power and amiable sovereignty, in the destruction of their enemies at the Red Sea; and in their protection and the miraculous supply of their wants during their journey through the wilderness.—All sinners are willing, that God should be the greatest, the wisest and most powerful being, if he would be on their side and employ his great and glorious perfections to gratify their desires and promote their selfish purposes. They really love him sometimes and for some things; and imagine, that they are really friendly to him. But when they come to see and realize, that he is holy in all his character and in all his ways and in all his works, they hate one of his perfections, as really as another; and one part of his character, as really as

another. They hate his holy power, his holy wisdom, his holy knowledge, his holy love, his holy mercy, his holy grace, his holy purposes and all the holy dispensations of his providence. When they realize, that God has made all things for himself and intends to dispose of all things to promote his own glory and the highest holy happiness of the universe, they hate his whole character and his whole conduct, without a single exception. When they discover the perfect and universal holiness of God, they can discern no form or comeliness in his character or conduct, wherefore they should love him; but they hate every thing he has done and every thing he has designed to do. There is not a single trait in his character, but what they perfectly hate. If sinners did but see and realize, that one perfection of God is as holy as another; and one instance of his conduct is as holy as another; and that his whole character and conduct are perfectly benevolent and harmonious, they would no more doubt of their total enmity and opposition to God, than of their own existence. The more clearly the whole character and the whole counsel of God are exhibited before them, the more the selfishness and sinfulness of their hearts will be awakened and realized. Paul once thought that he was blameless, but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died.

3. If God be perfectly holy, then every scheme of religion, which is founded in selfishness, is hateful to God and fatal to man. The gospel scheme of religion is founded in holiness, and all its essential doctrines are according to godliness; but every false scheme of religion is founded in selfishness, and all its essential doctrines are subversive of godliness. Arminianism

is a false scheme of religion and founded in selfishness. It teaches that all mankind come into the world entirely free from sin, and no more inclined to evil than to good. And though they afterwards become morally depraved, yet their depravity lies in their understanding and not in the heart. It teaches, that all men would love God supremely, if they only had a true speculative knowledge of his true character.--- They have no need of a renovation of heart, but only an enlightening of their understanding, to prepare them for heaven. They may love, obey, and enjoy God without having the least disinterested benevolence, or holiness of heart. This selfish scheme of religion is subversive of all godliness, or vital piety. Antinomianism is a false scheme of religion and founded in selfishness. It teaches, that it is impossible for men to act from any other motive, than self love ; and that they are under no obligation to love God, unless they know that he loves them and intends to make them forever happy. This scheme of religion is entirely subversive of holiness and diametrically repugnant to the law of God and the spirit of the gospel. Universalism is a false scheme of religion and founded in selfishness. It teaches, that men may live and die totally selfish and yet inherit and enjoy the kingdom of heaven. This scheme of religion is totally subversive of holiness and perfectly contrary to what nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand of mankind have always supposed to be either virtuous, or pious. I might mention sabellianism, arianism, socinianism and unitarianism, which are all so many branches of selfishness, which are directly opposed to the pure spirit and holy doctrines of the gospel. It seems strange, that

any with the bible in their hands should devise, or embrace any selfish scheme of religion and build their eternal hopes upon it. For if God be perfectly holy, it is morally impossible, that he should be pleased with an unholy religion, or approve of those, who embrace it. It is safe to say, that any scheme of religion which is founded in selfishness, must be hateful to a perfectly holy God; and totally disqualify men for the enjoyment of him both here and hereafter. It is immaterial by what name a selfish religion is called, or how generally it be circulated and approved, for it will certainly destroy its votaries, unless they renounce it and become holy as God is holy.

4. If God be perfectly holy, then he must disapprove and reject all the religious services of all the unholy impenitent and unrenewed. Though there be a great diversity in the outward appearance and conduct of sinners, yet they are all by nature totally selfish and sinful and equally destitute of supreme love to God, or true holiness. There is no essential difference between the heart of one sinner and the heart of another. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of one sinner answereth to another. They all act from the same selfish motives, whether they plough or sow, or whether they read or pray; and this he, who looketh on the heart and not on the outward appearance, sees and condemns. This he tells them plainly. He says, "the ploughing of the wicked is sin, and the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Our Savior said a great deal in his private and public discourses, to convince the best as well as the worst of sinners of the depravity of their hearts, which contaminated all their external services, however apparent-

ly regular, amiable and sincere. He knew how generally sinners trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and acceptable in the sight of God, on account of their exterior conformity to the divine commands, while they retained and cherished every selfish and sinful affection. His sermon on the mount, which delineated the nature and effects of pure, disinterested benevolence, was directly suited to expose and condemn all the selfish feelings, desires and pursuits of the most serious, devout, self-righteous sinners. But his private discourses were often much more pointed. He stripped the amiable young man of all his boasted goodness and confident hopes and sent him away sorrowful. He expressly said to some of the best of sinners, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Yea, he called them serpents and a generation of vipers and asked them how they could escape the damnation of hell." Human nature is still the same and the character and conduct and condition of the most amiable sinners, is still the same in the sight of an holy God. The apostle, therefore, asks those, who had too favorable an opinion of unbelievers, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" He then addresses himself to such, as had a disposition to overlook the total selfishness and depravity of sinners, and says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and I will receive you and be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." This representation is perfectly agreeable to Christ's declaration to his disciples, "I say unto you, that except your right-

eousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Paul says, that while he was a Pharisee, he was, in his own opinion, in respect to the righteousness of the law, blameless." There are multitudes at this day, who entertain the same views and hopes that Paul did, who are under the reigning power of a totally selfish and depraved heart. Such a heart renders their religious performances, altogether vile and odious in the view of an holy God, who will condemn and destroy them, unless they make them a new heart and a new spirit and turn from selfishness to holiness.

5. If God be perfectly holy, then sinners have no reason to desire preachers to lower down the terms of salvation, which he has proposed in the gospel. The terms, which he has proposed, require holiness of heart. The love he requires is holy love, the repentance he requires is holy repentance, the faith he requires is holy faith, the submission he requires is holy submission, and the obedience he requires is holy obedience. And he allows no substitute for holiness. Paul, who once thought, that he could obey and please God, without holy love, was thoroughly convinced of his fatal error and guilt and has stated it in the strongest terms.--- "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. By charity

here the apostle means pure holiness, or pure disinterested benevolence, which seeketh not its own. Without this, he says, men can do nothing pleasing to God or that will secure the salvation of their souls. But they all desire to be excused from exercising such holiness of heart and to substitute some external services in the room of it. And some preachers are willing to gratify them and lower down the essential conditions of the gospel. They tell them, that if they will only pay tithe of mint and annise, and cummin, they may safely omit the weighter matters of the law, justice, judgment and the love of God. But though this mode of preaching may please men for a while, yet it directly tends to destroy them forever. For God is a holy God ; and without holiness no man can please him, nor be admitted into his holy kingdom, nor enjoy the blessedness of it. The deceiver and the deceived must become holy, or eternally perish.

6. If God be perfectly holy ; then all sinners may see in what consists their inability to embrace the gospel. They often lament their impotence to comply with the terms of salvation and consider it as a great calamity. But if they would only look into their own hearts, they would see, that their impotence lies within themselves and arises solely from the selfish and sinful exercises of their own hearts ; and that the terms of salvation are as low and easy as God could make them. He requires nothing but what they must have in order to be happy in this world and in the world to come. It is morally impossible to save them without that holiness, which consists in the free and voluntary exercise of holy love, which is impartial, universal and disinterested benevolence.

7. It appears from what has been said, that there can be no neuters in religion. Every person must either love holiness, or hate it; and either love God, or hate him for his holiness; and either desire to go to heaven, or refuse to go. Life and death are set before all; and they are commanded to choose life, and condemned if they choose death. Sinners are in a critical and dangerous situation. They are in the hand of a holy God, who has a power and right to save, or destroy; and none can take them out of his hand. Be not deceived; for God will not be mocked with any thing, in the place of a holy heart. To all sinners he says, "*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*"

SERMON XVI.

SINNERS VAINLY ATTEMPT TO DISSOLVE THEIR OBLIGATIONS.

PSALMS, II. 3.—*Let us break their bands asunder; and cast away their cords from us.*

This psalm contains a prediction of Christ's coming to set up his spiritual kingdom in this world; and of the opposition, that should be made to his holy and gracious design, by all characters and classes of men. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands; and cast away their cords from us." By the Lord's anointed, David here means Christ, which name properly signifies anointed. Accordingly, he again calls him anointed in the forty-fifth psalm.—"Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, therefore God, thy God hath *anointed* thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The Father, Son and Holy Ghost were equally united and concerned in setting up the kingdom of Christ upon the earth. And therefore all the opposition of Jews and gentiles, of rulers and subjects, of high and low, was pointed against the one God in three persons. The reason, why sinners of all descriptions were united in opposing this holy spiritual kingdom, was because it came clothed with divine pow-

er and authority, which laid them under infinite bonds to return to God from whom they had revolted and to become reconciled to those bonds forever. The idea of being bound they could not endure; and unitedly engaged to free themselves, if possible, from their obligations to God. They said in words and actions, "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us." This is equally the spirit and language of sinners at the present day. They wish to break loose from God and throw off every divine restraint. The plain import of the text may be expressed in this general observation,

That sinners endeavor to free themselves from all obligations to God. I shall,

I. Show what obligations they are under to God;

II. Show that they endeavor to free themselves from such obligations; and,

III. Show that their endeavors will be in vain.

I. I am to show what obligations sinners are under to God. These are of various kinds.

1. They are under natural obligations to God.---Their nature, as dependent creatures, forms an intimate connection between them and their maker. Their dependance is constant and absolute. They cannot exist a moment without the immediate exertion of divine power. When God brought them into being, he gave them no power to preserve themselves in existence. They are no less dependent on God for preservation than they were for creation. This is true of all created beings. They have no self-supporting, or self-preserving power. In God they live, and move, and have their being. There is precisely the same connection between God and all his creatures, as there

is between cause and effect; and it is well known, that an effect can exist no longer than the cause, which produced it, continues to operate. My hand supports my book, which would instantly fall, if I should withdraw my hand. The hand of God supports my existence; and if he should withdraw his hand, I should no longer exist. This is true of all the children of men. They are continually in the hand of God; and must be so as long as they exist. Their dependance is absolute and universal. It respects all their natural powers and faculties, whether corporeal or mental. They are not sufficient to think, or speak, or act of themselves, independently of the presence and efficiency of God. They are as near to God and as dependant on him as omnipotence can make them. This natural dependance is a natural bond, cord, or obligation, by which God binds them to himself as closely and strongly as possible. And there is no idea more familiar to their minds, than this of dependance. It springs up in their minds in infancy, increases in childhood and youth and becomes stronger and more familiar through every stage of life. As soon as any one realizes, that he is a creature of God, he cannot help believing that he is under a natural obligation to him, by reason of his entire dependance on him for life and breath and all things.

2. Sinners are under a moral as well as a natural obligation to God. He is a being possessed of every natural and moral excellence. His heart is full of love and good will to all his creatures of every character, condition or capacity; and all his natural perfections are under the influence of his perfect and universal goodness. He has never said, nor designed,

nor done any thing, but what his perfect goodness dictated. And he never will do any thing contrary to the perfect benevolence of his heart. He never will feel, nor express any justice, but benevolent justice; nor any mercy, but benevolent mercy; nor treat any creature in any other manner, than a benevolent manner. His moral perfections are equal to his natural. He is as infinitely holy, just and good, as he is infinitely wise, knowing and powerful. And all these moral perfections he is every where displaying before the eyes of all mankind in all the works of creation and providence, which lay them under moral obligations to love, adore and obey him. So the apostle declares in the first of Romans. Speaking of the heathens themselves, who were destitute of divine revelation, he says, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful." The moral perfections of God are supremely amiable, and bind all mankind to love him supremely. The supreme moral excellence of God lays every intelligent creature, who is capable of seeing it, under moral obligation to glorify him as God. As every sinner is capable of knowing that God is perfectly good, so he is under moral obligation to love him for his goodness. And as he is capable of seeing that all the favors he enjoys come from his kindness and benificence, so he is under moral obligation to thank him for every blessing, which he receives from his hand. The whole

earth is full of the goodness of God ; and all men feel the happy influence of it, which binds them to feel and express supreme love to his character, and cordial obedience to every intimation of his will.

3. Sinners are under legal, as well as natural and moral obligation to God. His absolute supremacy gives him an independent right to assume the character of lawgiver. It properly belongs to him to give law to all his intelligent creatures. This right he has exercised towards mankind. He has expressly required them to love him with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength. This is the fundamental law of his kingdom, and virtually comprises all the precepts, prohibitions and threatenings contained in his word. This is a *legal obligation*, which God has laid upon sinners, in addition to the obligation arising from his moral character, prior to law. His moral character binds those, to whom he has never given law, by a mere *moral* obligation ; but his revealed will binds all those, to whom it is made known, by a legal obligation. Hence the apostle says, " Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them, who are under the law." No law can bind those, to whom it is not given and made known. But every law binds those, to whom it is given and made known, in exact proportion to the authority of the lawgiver ; for all legal obligation arises solely from the authority of the law-giver. The law of God binds men in exact proportion to his authority over them ; and since his authority over them is absolute and unlimited ; his law binds all, to whom it is given, with an infinite obligation to obedience. As his law is contained in his word ; so it is sent to all, to whom his word

is sent ; and infinitely binds all who become acquainted with it. Thus all sinners in this land of gospel light, are under *natural*, *moral* and *legal* obligations to God. These natural, moral and legal bonds, like a threefold cord, bind them to be and do whatever God has required. And these obligations lie upon them in their full force, whether they are willing, or unwilling to be bound by them. All divine laws bind the conscience, let the heart be what it will. And since sinners have consciences as well as saints, notwithstanding the total corruption of their hearts ; so they are under every kind of obligation to love and obey God, that saints are. I proceed to show,

II. That sinners endeavor to free themselves from all the obligations, which they are under to God.—They wish and endeavor to break his bands and cast away his cords from them.

1. This appears by their mode of speaking upon this subject. The inspired writers tell us what they say about their obligations to God. "They say unto him depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him ?" The same inspired writer, describing the wicked man and his feelings towards God, says, "He would fain flee out of his hand." David represents the inward language of the sinner, as expressing the same feelings. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." When Moses called upon Pharaoh in the name of God to let his people go, he obstinately said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Christ, in the parable of the talents, repre-

sents sinners as saying in regard to God, "We will not have him to reign over us." Whenever sinners speak out their feelings towards God, their language implies, that they wish there were no God; that they desire to banish him from their thoughts; and that they endeavor to get out of his hands and free themselves from all obligations to him.

2. They manifest the same carnal mind, which is enmity against God, by their mode of reasoning, as well as speaking, upon this subject. They endeavor to reason away all their obligations to God. Sometimes they argue against their natural obligation to him. They say, since God has brought them into being and given them their rational powers and faculties, they are able to love or hate, choose or refuse, to act or not to act, independently of his aid, direction, or control. They insist upon it, that as moral agents, they have a self-determining power over all their thoughts, affections, words and actions. They imagine they can demonstrate, that they have an independent existence, and an independent power to originate all their own volitions, and govern all their own conduct, without the least interposition of divine power, or superintendency. They boldly speak this independent language, when they say, "With our tongues will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" If they are told, that this mode of reasoning against their natural obligation to God is so absurd, that they cannot believe it themselves, they will generally grant that it is so; but they will immediately and confidently plead, that if they are absolutely dependent on God, then they are under no *moral* or *legal* obligation to him. They say, if they live, and move, and have

their being in God; if they are in his hand, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, then they are mere machines, have no moral freedom, and are under no moral, or legal obligation to God. They say their entire dependance destroys both their activity and accountability; and God has no right to blame them for being what he has made them, nor for doing what he has caused them to do. Thus sinners argued near two thousand years ago, when Paul told them, "God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." They were then ready to ask, "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" And how often do we now hear the same mode of reasoning against all obligations to love and obey God? Let the duty of repentance, or faith, be urged upon a sinner, how promptly and confidently will he reply, I cannot repent, or believe with my present heart; and I cannot make me a new heart. This is the work of God; and until he performs this work for me, I cannot be bound to love him, nor blamed for not loving him. I am a sinner and as such I am under no obligation to become a saint, a believer, or friend to Christ. If we should now ask this person, are you serious? are you in sober earnest in reasoning thus against your obligations to your maker? He would seriously answer, I am in earnest and I verily believe what I say is reasonable and unanswerable.—We do not pretend to answer this mode of reasoning at present; but only ask whether this is not the common mode of reasoning among sinners? and does it not clearly prove, that they desire and endeavor to disannul and dissolve all their moral and legal obligations to God? Besides,

3. It appears from their mode of acting, as well as from their mode of reasoning and speaking upon this subject that they desire and endeavor to free themselves from all obligations to become reconciled and obedient to God. They have actually exerted themselves to break his bonds and cast away his cords from them. When God sent a written message to Jehoiakim, king of Israel, did he not, after Jehudi had read three or four leaves, take it and cut it with his pen-knife and cast it into the fire, until all the roll was consumed? And did he not do this to get loose from his obligations to God? Since then have not the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers taken counsel together to burn the bible? We have certainly had accounts of such conduct, not only several hundred years ago among Pagans, but of late years among a nation, that has been both civilized and christianized. And what greater effort could have been made to throw off all allegiance and subjection to the God of heaven? Nor is there reason to doubt, whether the same spirit still remains in this land. This spirit our Savior represents as reigning in the hearts of sinners under the light of divine truth. Hear his parable in the twelfth of Mark. "A certain man planted a vineyard and set an hedge about it and digged a place for the wine-fat and built a tower and let it out to husbandmen and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him and beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant: and at him they cast stones and wounded him in the head and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent an-

other ; and him they killed ; and many others ; beating some and killing some. Having yet one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said amongst themselves, This is the heir ; come let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard do ? he will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard unto others." This is a striking representation of the feelings and conduct of sinners in respect to their obligations to God, the owner and proprietor of the universe. They have always been unwilling to acknowledge their obligations to him and have endeavored to free themselves from them and become independent. If they could only do this, they vainly imagine the world would be their own. And it is still the desire and endeavor of all sinners to possess and govern the world and to break every cord, by which they are bound to God and to make him their almighty servant. But,

III. All their desires and endeavors to get loose from their obligations to God will be in vain. And he has plainly told them so. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision." Could their vain and presumptuous desires and designs be set in a more contemptuous and humiliating light ! Solomon says, " A man's heart deviseth

his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." And again he says, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." And God himself challenged those sinners, who attempted to defeat his design and predictions, to do it if they could. "All the remnant of Judah shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs." God always has fulfilled his purposes and always will, notwithstanding all the vain attempts of his enemies to defeat them. He set his king on his holy hill of Zion, notwithstanding all the efforts of Jews and gentiles to prevent it. Whoever hardened themselves against God and prospered? Pharaoh did not. Ahab did not. Saul did not. And the crucifiers of Christ did not. Paul was constrained to bow to him, whose name he had blasphemed. But still sinners hope to succeed, in breaking the bands, which bind them to reconciliation and obedience to God. They must, however, be convinced of their folly and guilt, if they would seriously consider,

1. That they cannot destroy the existence of God. He exists in and of himself, independently of all other beings in the universe. He is infinitely above the reach of sinners. They cannot do any thing, that has the least tendency to destroy the existence of him, who made them. Can the thing formed destroy him, who formed it? Can all the enemies of God united, put forth a single effort to destroy him, if he only withdraws his supporting influence from them? But if they cannot destroy his existence, they can by no means dissolve their obligations to him. For as long as he exists, he will be their God, infinitely glorious and amiable and worthy of all their love, obedience

and homage. Their obligations to him are all founded in his being and perfections; and therefore must exist and remain in their full force, as long as he exists and remains what he is. They will be dependent on him as long as he exists; they will be under moral obligation to love him supremely, as long as he exists; and his holy and righteous law will bind them to obedience, as long as he exists. They cannot break his bands, nor cast away his cords, any more than they can destroy his existence. It is then utterly in vain for them to desire, or endeavour to dissolve their natural, moral and legal obligations to their maker. And now,

2. Let them consider, that they cannot destroy their own existence. As they cannot destroy the existence of God, so they cannot destroy the existence of themselves, because he, who gave them their existence at first, can continue it forever; and he has assured them in his word that he will do it. They may indeed dissolve the union between their souls and bodies, and put a period to their natural lives; but they cannot destroy their rational and immortal spirits. These are destined to exist after their bodies have crumbled to their pristine dust, from which they were taken.—As they had no power to come into existence, so they have no power to go out of it. But if they cannot destroy their own existence, then they cannot destroy their obligations to God. For as long as they exist, their relation to him and his relation to them will exist; and this mutual relation will forever support and enforce their obligations to him. So long as they exist, they will be his creatures; and as such, dependent on him and under moral obligation to love his character, obey his laws, and submit to his government.—

There is no more possibility of their destroying their obligations to God, than there is of their destroying both their own and the divine existence. The more they consider the grounds of their obligations to God, the more they must be convinced of the vanity and presumption, as well as guilt, of designing and attempting to break the bands and cast away the cords, by which they are bound to love and glorify God, as God and as their God, whose they are and in whom they live and move and have their being. Let them read and ponder what God says to them upon this most solemn and interesting subject. "See now that I, even I, am he; and there is no God with me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any, that can deliver out of my hand."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners endeavor to free themselves from all their obligations to God; then we may see what is the great subject of controversy between them and their creator. Ever since the first apostacy, there has been a serious and interesting controversy between God and his rebellious creatures here on earth. Though they began the controversy, yet he is willing to hear the ground of their disaffection and opposition and to settle the dispute between them upon just and reasonable terms. This he declares in a loud and solemn manner. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith; arise, contend thou before the mountains; and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy; and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people; and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee?

and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed thee out of the house of servants. O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted; and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." God knew, that sinners would not dare to state the ground of their controversy with him; and therefore he states it for them; and appeals to all the world to decide on which side the blame lay, whether his, or theirs. The point of controversy, which he here states is this; whether he had injured them, or they had injured him; or whether he should bind them, or they should bind him. God claims the right to bind sinners, but they deny his right to bind them in all cases whatsoever; and complain of his bands and cords as hard and unreasonable. So sinners in Babylon complained. They said, "The way of the Lord is not equal." The slothful servant made the same complaint. "He which had received the one talent, came, and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed." And sinners still keep up the same controversy with God. Their selfish hearts cannot bear the thought, that he should reign over them and bind them by infinite authority to love him supremely.--- They complain of the strictness, extent and spirituality of his first and great commandment, which requires them to love him with all the heart, with all the mind and with all the strength of their natural powers and faculties, upon pain of eternal death, when he knows that it is morally impossible, that they should love him

supremely without better hearts than they now have, and they say they can get no better. This leads them to murmur and complain of the hard and heavy bands, by which God binds them to love, obedience and submission. They say they cannot and will not submit to the government of a being, who treats them so unjustly and cruelly. But God says they shall submit or die. Here the point of controversy is, who shall govern, whether God or they; or who shall submit, whether God or they. This is a most serious and interesting controversy. But there is no difficulty in seeing, that God is on the right side of this question and sinners are on the wrong. There is no ground to doubt whether God ought to govern and sinners ought to submit. His laws, his bands and his cords are just such as they ought to be; and just such as sinners ought to submit to cordially and cheerfully. This God knows to be true; and sinners will know to be true, whether their criminal controversy finally terminates in their conversion, or destruction.

2. Though sinners are naturally disposed to free themselves from their obligations to God, yet they are not always sensible of it. They commonly think, that they have no such disposition to complain of the bands and cords, by which they are bound to God and to desire and endeavor to break and cast them away. And though they are told this is their disposition, they will seriously say, that they were never conscious of it; and they cannot believe it is true; and therefore complain of the preacher, who represents them as having it in their hearts to contend with their maker. There is good reason to believe, that many sinners at many times can truly make such declarations. For many

sinners habitually live in great stupidity. God is not in all their thoughts. Or if they think of him, they think of him as a being, that has nothing to do with them and that they have nothing to do with him.— Though they are actually under natural, moral and legal obligations to God, yet they do not feel that they are bound by these bands and cords, but imagine they are as free, as if there were no God. They do, in their own apprehension, live without God in the world.--- Or if they believe, in speculation, there is a God, still they are willing that such a great and wise and powerful, and benevolent being should exist, so long as they imagine he intends to do them nothing but good, as long as they live. But let them only awake out of their stupidity and realize that God is displeased with them for their vanity, stupidity, impenitence and unbelief; and is disposed to punish them forever; and they will soon find within them a carnal heart, which is enmity against God and not subject to his law, nor government, nor indeed can be. They will then realize the bands and cords, which bind them to God; and which they will desire and endeavor, with all their might, to break and cast from them. They will then regret and complain, that God has given them a dependent existence, a conscience which reproves and condemns them, a heart which is corrupt and depraved, a soul that is immortal and which he may save, or destroy. Then all the love they ever had to God will turn into hatred; all the peace they ever had will turn into pain; and all the hope they ever had will turn into despair. It will then appear a fearful thing to be in the hands of God as the clay is in the hands of the potter; and there is none to deliver. This is no

visionary representation. It may be realized by sinners, who are now at ease in Zion and saying in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

3. If sinners endeavor to free themselves from all their obligations to God; then we see, why they are the most opposed to the most essential and important doctrines of the gospel. They can very patiently hear many doctrines and duties of christianity taught and inculcated; but the principal and cardinal doctrines and duties of the gospel are very disagreeable to their hearts. They often feel and sometimes manifest a sensible opposition to the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of election and especially the doctrine of reprobation. The reason is plain and obvious, why these doctrines in particular are so displeasing to them. The reason is, these doctrines bring into view the bands and cords, by which they are bound to God and cannot get out of his hands. If they are totally depraved; then they are bound by the cords of their iniquities. If they must be regenerated; then they are dependent on sovereign grace. If election and reprobation be true; then God made the bands and cords by which they are bound from all eternity. If all these doctrines be true, then they cannot themselves break the cords by which they are bound, nor can any created being break them; but they must be holden as long as God and they exist. And to be absolutely bound to a being, whom they perfectly hate, without a possibility of breaking their bands, must be extremely distressing. It is not strange, therefore, that they oppose the peculiar and

essential doctrines of the gospel, which is a glass in which they cannot help seeing themselves in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Let a preacher only tell them, that these doctrines are not true ; and they feel at liberty and peace ; and no other doctrines will disturb them. For the truth of this, I appeal to observation and experience. Do we see or hear, that any people complain of preaching, which does not bring these doctrines into view ; or do they ever appear to be in anxiety and distress about the concerns of their souls, or their spiritual and eternal state ? and do they not rather ascribe all such anxiety and distress to the workings of a deluded imagination ? But what says experience in this case ; I mean the experience of those, who are inwardly displeased with these peculiar, pinching doctrines ? Do they not feel a load thrown off from their minds and set at loose and ease, when they hear these doctrines denied, discarded and reprobated ? This is proof sufficient, that the reason why they are so disagreeable to the hearts of many, is that they discover and fasten the bands and cords, which bind them to God.

4. If sinners endeavor to free themselves from their obligations to God ; then they always endeavor to stifle convictions. Some unhappy occurrence, or some sudden bereavement, or some affecting discourse about the joys of heaven and the miseries of the damned, may awaken and alarm sinners, without producing any genuine convictions. But a sense of danger is very different from a sense of guilt, or desert of punishment in which real conviction of sin consists. Sinners are never convinced, that they deserve God's wrath and curse both in this life and in that which is to come, un-

til they not only feel their obligations to God, but the propriety and justice of the bands and cords, by which he has bound them to himself. When they realize, that he had a right to make them dependent, to lay them under moral obligation, and to bind them by the infinite authority of his law to love him supremely, upon pain of endless destruction; then they feel their guilt for violating such sacred obligations to their creator and law-giver; and are convinced, that they deserve to die for their disaffection and rebellion against such a great and glorious being as God now appears to be. But while they are merely awakened and alarmed by the apprehension of danger, they have no such convictions of sin and guilt; and therefore, rather pity, than condemn themselves. And they often take comfort under their awakenings, and try to cherish and continue them, with a hope they will do them good, and finally prove the means of their conversion and salvation. Though they are painful to endure, yet they have such strong and ardent desires to be saved and to escape eternal destruction, that they would be willing to endure them as long as they live, if this might only be the consequence. Accordingly, instead of stifling, they mean to cherish their awakenings, and often say, that they are afraid they shall lose their sense of danger and become stupid. But they do not feel so reconciled to convictions. These they dread and endeavor to stifle. For these are the bands and cords that bind them, which they desire and endeavor, with all their might, to break and cast from them.—Convictions weaken their strength and hopes and fasten their cords and throw them into the sovereign hands of God, from which they feel they cannot escape.

They could bear their infirmities or fears, but a wounded spirit they cannot bear. While they feel themselves at liberty to murmur and complain and to pity themselves as hardly dealt with, they find self-support. But when they feel self-condemned, as well as legally condemned; and that the same bands and cords, which bind them to duty, equally bind them to future and eternal punishment, they realize, that there is no alternative, but cordially to approve of their just condemnation, or lie under the weight of it forever. But under such clear convictions of guilt, their carnal mind, which is enmity against God will not suffer them to submit. They had rather die, than do it. Then is the time if ever, for God to change their hearts and save their souls; or still reserve them to the judgment and condemnation of the last day.

5. If sinners are under such natural, moral and legal obligations to God, as have been mentioned; then he can awaken and convince them at any time he pleases. Though they feel at ease and liberty and imagine they can walk in the ways of their heart and in the sight of their eyes as long as they please, without any restraint; yet they are actually bound by bands and cords that they cannot break. And it is only for him to open their eyes to see and their consciences to feel the bands and cords, by which they are bound, in order to throw them into the deepest anxiety and distress. And this he can do, when they are sick, or when they are well; when they are in adversity, or in prosperity; when they are in the house of God, or when they are absent; when they are busy, or when they are idle.—They are never out of his sight, nor out of his reach. He always has access to their minds and can direct the

arrows of conviction to their consciences, at any time and in any place he pleases. Though they put far away the evil day and resolve to shut their eyes and their ears against divine truth and harden their hearts and consciences against all means of conviction ; yet God can open their eyes and ears and break their resolutions and fill their hearts and consciences with guilt and remorse. He can do this, though they have made a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement. He can separate their hearts and hands, however linked together, and take one and leave another. This he has done ; and is continually doing. He can break their bands and fasten his own, which they cannot break. They have no ground to rejoice and exult in their power to resist convictions and maintain their peace and security ; for they have no such power only when God lets them alone. And they know not how long he will let them alone. It seems to be high time for him to rise in his awful majesty and make them see and feel, that they are in his hand, as the clay is in the hand of the potter ; and that he can crush them as a potter's vessel.

6. Since sinners endeavor to free themselves from all their obligations to God, we may see why they are so extremely averse from prayer. There is no duty they are so unwilling to perform. They are unwilling to be exhorted to this duty ; and much more unwilling to perform it. The reason is, they cannot pray, without acknowledging their obligations to God, which they hate and wish to break. The child feels this ; and neglects to pray. The youth feels this ; and neglects to pray. Those, that are pursuing vanities, feel this ; and neglect to pray. The sober moral sin-

ner feels this ; and neglects to pray. All sinners wish to forget, or break their obligations to God ; and cannot bear to strengthen them, by going to him in secret and acknowledging them. Let any sinner, who has cast off fear and restrained prayer, go to God in prayer this evening and he will feel that he has bound himself to pray to-morrow and from day to day, as long as he lives. But he hates his obligations to God ; and will not begin to pray. Or if he does begin, he will neglect it as soon as his sense of his obligations to God is gone. This is true of every careless, stupid or merely awakened sinner. But the sinner under genuine convictions, has different feelings in respect to prayer. He is afraid to pray, because he feels he cannot sincerely acknowledge the justice of these bands and cords, which he wishes with all his heart to break and intends to break, if possible, as long as he exists. Many a convinced sinner has thus become speechless and found he could say nothing like prayer, which was consistent with his total enmity to God. Parents have no reason to wonder that they cannot persuade their children to pray ; and ministers have no reason to wonder that they cannot persuade sinners to begin to pray, or after they have lost their awakenings and convictions, they cannot persuade them to begin to pray again. When any person prays, he acknowledges his obligations to God and pledges himself to do his whole duty. This the sinner is not willing to do ; and therefore neglects to pray. This the person, who has lost his convictions, is not willing to do ; and therefore neglects to pray. And this the false or declining professor is not willing to do. It is the fear of men's acknowledging and confirming their obligations to God, that prevents their be-

ginning to pray and disposes them to neglect it after they have once begun. Every prayerless person in this house knows whether this be true or not; and whether he is one, who desires and endeavors to break all the bands and cords, by which he is bound to God. Every sinner either neglects to pray, or prays amiss, to his own self-condemnation and confusion. In what a wretched and guilty condition are all sinners.

7. If all sinners are under natural, moral and legal obligations to God; then they are all, without exception, bound to be religious, or to fulfil their obligations to their maker, who has made them rational, immortal and accountable creatures. These divine obligations lie with all their weight upon children, upon youth, upon all men, whether rich or poor, high or low, learned or unlearned. No age, no condition, no secular concerns, can dissolve their obligations. But how many sinners practically deny their obligation to be religious and expect that they shall generally be allowed this privilege, without any censure or disapprobation of any, but a few bigoted religionists, or over-orthodox preachers! How many would be ashamed to be found reading the bible seriously, or calling upon God devoutly, or attending public worship statedly? Do not such, by their speaking, reasoning and acting, plainly show, that they endeavor to break every religious obligation and desire to live without God in the world? Has God then misrepresented their character and conduct in his word? If not, they are his perfect enemies and deserve to be treated as his enemies forever. This he will, sooner or later, make them see and feel.

Finally, if sinners are bound to God, by bands and cords, which they cannot break, nor cast away; then it is their immediate and imperious duty to cease from contending with their maker; and to become cordially reconciled to the bands and cords, by which he has bound them to himself. David did this. He said to God sincerely, "O how love I thy law?" Paul felt and expressed the same spirit. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." If you become reconciled to your obligations to God, they will prove a source of perpetual blessedness. But if you persist in hating and opposing them, they will prove a source of self-condemnation and misery forever. I now ask, what you intend to do? And God may treat you, according to your present resolution. But are you willing he should? If you refuse to submit to God and to the bands and cords, by which you are bound to him as surely as you live and as God lives, he will be bound, by his own goodness, to punish you forever and ever. "*And what wilt thou say, when he shall punish thee.*"

SERMON XVII.

GIVING THE HEART TO GOD A REASONABLE DUTY.

PROVERBS, XXIII, 26.—*My son, give me thine heart.*

Mankind are reasonable creatures; and the religion, which God enjoins upon them, is a reasonable service. But yet it has always been found extremely difficult to reason with men upon religious subjects.—Solomon was the wisest of men and understood religion, as well as any other art, or science. And in the latter part of his life, after he had thoroughly investigated the laws of nature and examined the principles and practices of mankind, he turned preacher; and no mere man ever preached better upon the subjects which he handled. But though his observations were very weighty, though his illustrations were very striking, and though his words were wisely chosen and, like goads, extremely pointed; yet it does not appear, that they very often produced any genuine convictions and saving effects. There was the same difficulty then, that there is now, in reasoning upon that religion, which God requires, and which is altogether disagreeable to every natural heart. Were it not for the moral depravity of human nature, it would be as easy to convince men, that they ought to love God, as it is to convince them, that a child ought to love his parent, or that a servant ought to love his master. But so long as the carnal mind remains, which is enmity

against God, it is extremely difficult to convey light and conviction to the understandings and consciences of sinners, upon the disagreeable subject of religion. This is the principal difficulty in the way of making every one feel his obligation to obey the precept in the text---"my son, give me thine heart." God here speaks, with paternal affection and authority, to every one of his undutiful and disobedient children; and they are all under indispensable obligations to hear and obey his voice. It is, therefore, proposed,

I. To explain the precept in the text; and,

II. To show the reasonableness of complying with it.

I. The first thing to be considered is the import, or proper meaning of giving the heart to God.

1. This implies the exercising of love to him. To love and to give the heart, signify the same thing.--- No man is ever said to give his heart to any object, without loving that object. Men may attend to a thousand things, converse about them, and reason upon them, without loving them, or giving their heart to them. But when they love any object, they may then be said to give their heart to it. Men may believe the being of God and see the displays of his perfections in his word and providence, while they exercise no love to him, but withhold their hearts from him. So our Lord teaches, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." As not giving the heart to God is not loving him, so giving the heart to God must mean actually loving him.

2. Giving the heart to God implies not only loving him, but loving him for what he is in himself. Men may love God for his favors, without loving his true

character. The Israelites loved God for opening a passage through the Red Sea and delivering them from the enemies, that pursued them, while they were real enemies to his amiable character and glorious designs. Satan supposed, that Job might have loved God for the smiles of his providence, while he had a heart to curse him for his frowns. Our Lord reproved those, who loved him for the loaves and fishes, but hated his character and doctrines. It is as common now, as ever it was, to love God and Christ from mercenary motives; but this is not truly giving their hearts to their creator and redeemer. For mercenary love always terminates upon the good bestowed, or expected; and not upon the bestower. God is never truly loved, but only when he is loved for what he is in himself. True love to God terminates upon his truly amiable and excellent character. It is natural for sinners to love those, who love them. And whenever they imagine that God loves them and intends to save them, it is as natural for them to love him, as any other supposed benefactor. But this is really loving themselves and not God; and is actually keeping their hearts to themselves, instead of giving them to him. Therefore it is necessary to observe,

3. That giving the heart to God implies loving him supremely. The expression, "to give God the heart," naturally denotes supreme affection. It has this meaning when applied to inferior objects. When Judah pleaded for the return of Benjamin, he told Joseph, that his father loved Benjamin; and to express the strength of his affection for him, he subjoined, that his "father's life was bound up in the life of the lad." To express strong and supreme affection in a parent towards a

child, it is common to say, that his heart is bound up in that child. Though mankind may sincerely and properly love one another, without loving one another supremely, yet they cannot love God properly and sincerely, without loving him supremely. To love God for what he is in himself, necessarily implies loving him above all other objects. He is the supreme being; he possesses supreme natural and moral excellencies; and to love him for these, is to love him supremely. A man may love God for his favors, while he loves himself and other objects more than God; but he cannot love God for his superlative moral excellence, while he loves himself, or any other object more than his creator. The scripture always represents true love to God as supreme. God says to every man, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," which is virtually saying, "Thou shalt suffer no object, but myself, to take the supreme place in your heart." The first and great command to every man is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" which is tantamount to saying, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God supremely. The divine Savior requires supreme love to himself. "He that loveth father or mother more than me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." And the apostle John represents true love to God as supreme. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." His obvious meaning is, that there can be no true love to God, but what is supreme. If we admit scripture to explain scripture, we must conclude, that the command in the text requires supreme love to God. To give God the heart cannot

signify any thing less, than loving him and loving him supremely for what he is in himself. The paternal precept in the text, "My son, give me thine heart," requires all the children of men to love God with a sincere, constant and supreme affection. I now proceed to show,

II. The reasonableness of complying with this divine injunction. Here let us consider,

1. That we are the offspring of God. He hath made us and not we ourselves. He is the father of our spirits and the former of our bodies. He hath made us wiser than the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven. His inspiration has given us understanding. We have derived all our rational and immortal powers from him; and by his constant visitation we are preserved in existence. There is no other being on whom we are so absolutely dependent; and there is no other being, who has such an absolute propriety in us.—These are plain and obvious reasons for his requiring, and for our giving him, our hearts. He says, "If I am a father, where is mine honor? and if I am a master, where is my fear?" If he be our kind and almighty Father, we ought to feel like children towards him and give him the supreme affection of our hearts. We esteem our existence as infinitely valuable. We would not exchange our rational and immortal spirits for the whole material creation. But whatever we have, that is rational, that is immortal, that is either naturally or morally excellent, we have received from him. Indeed, we have nothing, but what we have received from him. Our capacity of knowing his existence, of discerning his moral excellence and of loving his great and amiable character, we have received from him;

yea, our capacity of loving and enjoying any thing, we have received from his infinite fulness. Nothing, therefore, can be more reasonable in the nature of things, than to love our maker in whom we live and move and have our being, with supreme affection.

2. God is in himself infinitely worthy of the supreme love of all mankind. He is possessed of every great and amiable attribute. He is self-existent and independent. He has always existed and will always exist. His power is unlimited and he can do every thing, that can be done. He has made and constantly upholds all things, by the word of his power. The heavens and the earth and the whole creation are lighter in his hands, than a feather in ours. His understanding is infinite and surveys all things in all their relations and connections constantly and perfectly. His presence surrounds all creatures and fills all places.—He is an absolute sovereign, whose hand none can stay, and whose will none can control. He is infinitely greater than any and all created intelligencies. All his creatures are as nothing and less than nothing and vanity in comparison with his unlimited and immense existence. These natural perfections of God are inseparably connected with his pure and universal benevolence. God is love. He regards all his creatures from the highest to the lowest, with a tender and benevolent heart. He is good unto all and his tender mercies are over all his works. His love is entirely disinterested and never degenerates into partiality, injustice, malevolence, or any other unholy affection. The most discerning eyes of men and of angels never have discovered and never will discover the least deformity, or imperfection in his moral character. Our Father,

who is in heaven, is supremely excellent in all his natural and moral attributes. It is therefore in the highest degree reasonable, that we should give him the supreme place in our hearts. The intrinsic and supreme excellence of the moral character of God, is the highest possible reason, why we should love him supremely.

3. The conduct, as well as the character of God, renders it altogether reasonable, that we should give him our hearts. He has done more for us, than for any other of his rational creatures. He has exercised his absolute sovereignty in mercy to his sinful and ill-deserving creatures on earth. Here he has done his most marvellous works and bestowed his most rich and distinguishing favors. For, he has given his Son to die, to redeem us from the wrath to come. To the meanest and vilest of mankind, he has made the gracious offer of eternal life. Some of his most inveterate enemies he has turned into friends and made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And he is still carrying on his great and merciful design of redeeming love, from day to day, as well as from age to age; and bringing home many sons to glory. The operations of his grace towards the sinful children of men, excite the admiration and joy of all the heavenly hosts. How reasonable is it, then, that we should give our hearts to God, who has set his heart upon us and done as much as it is morally possible for him to do for our everlasting good? God loveth our world, and is constantly displaying the wonders of his grace before our eyes. We have, therefore, not only the strongest, but the most distinguishing and endearing reasons to love him supremely and ardently.

4. It is reasonable, that men should give God the supreme affection of their hearts, because it will afford

them the highest happiness, that they are capable of enjoying. All permanent happiness flows from love. None can enjoy true happiness without placing their supreme affections upon some agreeable object; and that object, which stands highest in their affections, must afford them their highest felicity. Those, who love the world supremely, derive their highest happiness from the world they love. This is evident from universal observation. How often do we see worldly minded men become immediately wretched, by losing the things of the world, which they once loved and possessed? Rational creatures always find their highest happiness in the object, in which their hearts are bound up. The natural and irresistible conclusion is, that men must give their hearts to God, the greatest and best of beings, in order to enjoy the highest happiness. So long as their affections are alienated from him, a realizing sense of his character and perfections, must fill their minds with the most fearful apprehensions.—But as soon as they love him supremely, they will find that peace, which passeth all understanding.—David acknowledges before God, that he found complete satisfaction in the love and enjoyment of him. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." Whoever loves God supremely enjoys a blessed union and communion with him, which is a source of the purest and highest enjoyment. "He, that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God; and God in him." The only possible way to enjoy such a blessed union and communion with God, is to love him supremely; and this is a just and powerful reason, why we should give our whole hearts to him. I must add,

5. It is in the highest degree reasonable, that men should give their hearts to God, because there is nothing to hinder them from doing it, but what is entirely criminal and inexcusable. They must love some object supremely; and of course they must love God supremely, or some idol in his place. But there is no being, or object in the universe, that deserves their supreme affection besides God; and therefore they must be wholly criminal and inexcusable, if they place their supreme affection upon any other being or object. In the first place, there is no object in the world to prevent their seeing God. The heavens declare his glory and the firmament sheweth his handy work. All the objects, that present themselves to the eyes and the ears and the understandings of mankind, instead of pushing him out of sight, bring him into view. God is to be seen in the flowers of the field, the fruits of the earth, in the earth itself and in all that lives and moves upon the earth. Whatever is beautiful and amiable in nature, displays the moral excellence and glory of the God of nature and calls upon mankind to give him the supreme affection of their hearts. In the next place, when God is brought into view, he is the only object to be found, that is worthy of supreme affection. What is the power, the wisdom and benevolence of man, in comparison with the power, the wisdom and benevolence of God, who is over all and above all, blessed forever more? Why should any man love the world and the things of the world, more than the creator of the world? Why should any man place supreme trust in any prince or potentate on earth, instead of placing his supreme trust and confidence in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength, and per-

fect benevolence? When God challenges men to bring their strong reasons, why they forsake him and place their supreme affections upon inferior objects, their mouths are stopped and their consciences plead guilty. No good reason can be given, why those, who know God, should not love and glorify him as God.--- Nor will it avail any to plead, in the last place, that their hearts are so selfish and corrupt and attached to the world, that they cannot love God supremely. For this is implicitly acknowledging, that there is nothing to hinder them from loving God supremely, but what is wholly criminal and inexcusable. If they are capable of loving themselves and the world supremely, they are certainly capable of loving God supremely. They are just as capable of placing their supreme affection upon God, as upon any inferior objects. And if they place their supreme affections upon any inferior objects, they are guilty of idolatry. The apostle says, that covetousness, or supreme love to the world, is idolatry. It is setting up idols in the heart. This God forbids and condemns. As there is nothing, that can prevent men from loving God supremely, but their criminal love to themselves and the world, so it is infinitely reasonable, that they should renounce all their selfish, sinful and idolatrous affections, and give their hearts to God, who is supremely worthy of their supreme affection and regard.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be reasonable, that men should give their hearts to God; then it is reasonable, that all men should be really religious. All true religion consists in supreme love to God. This love is the fulfilling of

the law. God requires nothing more nor less of any of mankind, than to give him the supreme place in their hearts. And if this be reasonable for one person to do, then it is equally reasonable that every person, without a single exception, should do it. The precept in the text applies to every individual person, who is capable of understanding it. The Father of spirits says to every one of his children, who is capable of understanding his language, "My son, give me thine heart." And this paternal command alone renders it reasonable for every one to obey it. It is not only clothed with infinite authority, but founded in the superlative excellency of the divine character. God is the proper, and the only proper object of that supreme homage of the heart, in which all true religion consists. All the reasons, which have been mentioned, for men's loving God supremely, are so many reasons for their being truly religious. Who will presume to say, that the reasons, which have been mentioned, for men's loving God supremely, are not just and conclusive? And if they be just and conclusive, then it is reasonable for all men to love God supremely; and consequently it is no less reasonable for all men to be religious, and give their hearts to God. But if it be reasonable for all men to be religious, how can it be reasonable for any to be irreligious? How can it be reasonable for the young to walk in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes, and be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? How can it be reasonable for rich men, to trust in their riches and say to themselves, we have goods laid up for many years; let us eat and drink and fare sumptuously every day? How can it be reasonable for great men, to refuse to

bow down and kneel, and pay religious and supreme homage to the Lord their maker? How can it be reasonable for careless and stupid sinners, to say in their hearts, there is no God, or to say that the Lord hath forsaken the earth and will not do good, neither will he do evil? How can it be reasonable for awakened sinners, who see themselves in the hands of an angry God, who can save or destroy and whose mercy they ardently implore, to refuse to give him their hearts? This they always do, while they stand and contend with their maker and call him a hard master. These and all other descriptions of sinners withhold their hearts from God. And though some of them will allow, that it is reasonable, that they should read and pray and perform every external act of religion; yet they all insist, that God is unreasonable and requires too much, when he requires them to give him their hearts and love him supremely. So true is it, that "the understanding of every sinner is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the *blindness of his heart.*"

2. If it be reasonable, that all men should give their hearts to God; then they have no reason to think hard of him, for condemning and rejecting all their religious services, so long as they withhold their hearts from him. God does expressly condemn the religious services of all, who refuse to give him the supreme affection of their hearts. He declares, that "the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to him;" and that "when they spread forth their hands, he will hide his eyes from them; yea, when they make many prayers, he will not hear." And our Savior addressing himself to Pharisees, says, Wo unto you; for ye tithe mint

and rue and all manner of herbs and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." All sinners pass over the love of God and neglect to give him the supreme affection of their hearts in their best services.— These are not, as they imagine, negatively good, but positively evil. They flow from their hearts, which are enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. The hearts of sinners are as much in their prayers, as the hearts of saints are in their prayers. And as the hearts of saints render their prayers positively good; so the hearts of sinners render their prayers positively bad. When they pray, instead of expressing supreme love to God, they express supreme love to themselves; and instead of seeking his glory and the interests of his kingdom, they seek their own personal, private, selfish interest, in opposition to his glory and the highest good of the universe. This God abhors and condemns; and this they ought to abhor and condemn; and this they must abhor and condemn, before they can reasonably hope to be heard and accepted. When they are under genuine convictions and see the plague of their own hearts, they are sensible, that their best services are highly displeasing to God; and that he may justly reject both them and their services forever. Merely awakened sinners are extremely apt to think, that they have good desires and that they express good desires in seeking and striving for salvation; but this is only building their hopes upon their own righteousness, and resisting genuine convictions and justifying themselves and condemning God for not hearing their ardent cries for mercy. But distressed sinners must renounce such self-justifying and God-condemning de-

sires and prayers, before they can have any just ground to expect, that God will save them from the destruction they fear and deserve.

3. If it be reasonable for men to give God the supreme affection of their hearts; then it is reasonable to exhort them to exercise supreme love to God immediately. God is as worthy of supreme love now, as he ever will be. Sinners are as capable of loving him supremely now, as they ever will be. There is no station they fill, there is no business they are pursuing; there is no situation they are in; and there is nothing within or without them, that is any obstacle in the way of loving God supremely, at the present time, as well as at any future period. There is every reason, why they should give their hearts to God immediately, as why they should give their hearts to him at all. Every command, which requires them to turn from sin to holiness requires them to turn immediately. Every command, which requires them to repent, requires them to repent immediately. And every command, which requires them to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit, requires them to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit immediately. God says, "Choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve;" and "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." If it be reasonable for sinners to obey these commands, it must be reasonable to exhort them to obey, just as God requires them to obey. Those, who are to warn them from him and in his name, ought to warn them in his words and not in their own. They have no right to give them leave to delay giving their hearts to God, any more than to give them leave to delay reading his word, or calling upon his name, or doing any thing which he has required.

And to intimate that they are doing their duty, while they are neglecting to give their hearts to God, which is the essence of all duty, is virtually teaching them disobedience and rebellion. But how often is this done? And how pleased are sinners, when their teachers teach them, to delay loving God supremely for the present, which is really teaching them to delay forever. It is taking off the whole force of the command in the text, "My son, give me thine heart;" and of every other command in the bible.

4. If it be reasonable for men to give their hearts to God; then every scheme of religion, which allows them to withhold their hearts from him, is unreasonable, unscriptural and essentially false. All true religion essentially consists in supreme love to God; and therefore every scheme of religion, which allows men to withhold their supreme affection from him, is another gospel and diametrically contrary to the gospel of Christ. Such false and dangerous schemes of religion were devised and propagated in Christ's and the apostles' days; and they have continued to be devised and propagated from that time to this. The Antinomians teach men to love themselves more than God, or to love him only for his favors, which is not loving him at all.--- They maintain, that no man ought to love God before he knows, that God will save him; which is implicitly saying, that men ought not to give their hearts to God until he gives his heart to them. Indeed, it is the fundamental principle of Antinomianism, that God is never to be loved supremely for what he is in himself, or for his supreme moral excellence, which is subversive of all true religion. The Arminians teach men to love themselves more than God, and keep their hearts to

themselves, while they pay him mere external respect and obedience. They teach the same doctrine, that the Scribes and Pharisees taught, which was, that all religion consists in mere external services, which may be performed without the least love to God. The Pharisee, that went up to the temple to pray and even Paul himself, thought he was blameless, while he loved himself supremely and externally honored God, with a heart which was far from him. The universalists teach men to love themselves more than God and to love him only for the sake of salvation. They allow them not only to keep their hearts to themselves, but to act them out as much as they please, with full confidence, that nothing can separate them from the everlasting approbation and enjoyment of God. As all these schemes of religion deny the necessity of a change of heart and the duty of loving God supremely, they are essentially erroneous and fatally dangerous. They are rotten at the root, and directly calculated to deceive and destroy those, who cordially embrace them. For these and all other false schemes of religion are agreeable to every natural heart, which is enmity against God. All men wish to be happy in a future state and have no aversion to any scheme of religion, which they think will save them, while they withhold their hearts from God and love themselves supremely.

5. If it be reasonable for men to give their hearts to God; then it is extremely unreasonable in those, who have once given their hearts to God, to withdraw them from him. Those, who have once given their hearts to God, know what it is to love him supremely and what great and peculiar happiness is to be found in the love and enjoyment of him. And when they first

give their hearts to God, they are apt to imagine, that they shall always keep themselves in the love of God, and never forget, nor forsake him. But many have been sadly disappointed in their early hopes and resolutions. The hearts of christians are like a deceitful bow, bent to backsliding, and are not to be trusted, but to be kept with all diligence. God represents himself disappointed, when those, who have professed to be his dutiful children, withdraw their filial affection from him and falsify their profession. "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie." If we examine the feelings and conduct of God towards those, who had lost their first love, we shall find, that he manifested his peculiar displeasure towards them and often corrected them more severely than his real and open enemies. Saints are of all men the most unreasonable and inexcusable, for murmuring and complaining, like Job, Jonah and Elijah; and acting like Aaron, Moses and Peter. Nothing can interrupt that supreme love to God, which is essential to the christian character, but directly opposite affections.—When christians do not love, they hate; when they do not believe, they disbelieve; when they do not obey, they disobey; and when they do not act for God, they act against him. And for them to hate him, whom they have loved supremely; or to disbelieve him, in whom they have perfectly confided; or to disobey him, whom they have delightfully obeyed; or to act against him, for whom they have cordially and sincerely acted, must be peculiarly inconsistent, unreasonable and criminal. The best of men, therefore, have abundant reason and sometimes realize, that they have abundant reason, to feel as Job did, when he said to

God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

6. If it be reasonable for men to give their hearts to God; then they may reasonably expect to meet his approbation and acceptance, when they do love him sincerely and supremely. It is not reasonable, that he should love them before they love him; but after they do love him sincerely and supremely, they are truly amiable and worthy of his complacency and approbation. And they may assure themselves, that they are actually interested in his favor and entitled to share in the blessings of his kingdom. For he has promised to return to them, who return to him and to love them that love him and cause all things to work together for their good. Many are very anxious to know, whether they belong to the household of faith and are the children of God, and heirs with Christ to an heavenly inheritance. And for this reason, are often inquiring what are evidences of grace; and sometimes they ask, what is the best evidence of grace. To this serious and important question, the whole tenor of this discourse replies, *Supreme love to God.* It is only for men to look into their own hearts, to know whether they are the children of God and heirs of eternal life. If they are conscious of loving God supremely, they need not doubt whether they are the children of God and subjects of his special grace. But nothing short of this can give them evidence that their hearts are really renewed; for self-love can put on every appearance of supreme love to God, though essentially different from it. Here lies the greatest danger of men's deceiving themselves. But still it may be inquired, how shall men know whether

they do really give their supreme affection to God? I answer, by this infallible effect. Those, who give their hearts to God, or love him supremely, always give themselves to God, with all their interests for time and eternity. And this is what no self-love will do. It is only to apply this criterion to the heart, and it will confirm, or destroy the hope of any person. Let all then be entreated for their own sake, to apply this criterion to what they are conscious has passed and habitually passes in their minds, that they may determine whether they are friends, or enemies to God, they themselves being judges. And certainly it belongs to all, as reasonable creatures, to act this reasonable part towards themselves.

SERMON XVIII.

THE TENDENCY OF THE GOSPEL TO ENLARGE THE HEART.

II. Corinthians, vi. 11.—*Our heart is enlarged.*

The apostle preached the gospel with great success in Corinth, where he formed a large number of converts into a christian church, to whom he preached a year and six months. His long residence with them laid a foundation for his very strong attachment to them. But soon after he left them, they were led into errors, animosities and contentions, by false and corrupt teachers. When he heard of their unhappy situation, he wrote his first epistle to them, to correct their errors and re-unite them in their former peace and harmony. Though this letter produced some good effects; yet new difficulties arose, which gave occasion to his writing to them again. This second epistle breathes a very tender and affectionate spirit. In the two preceding chapters and in the beginning of this, he speaks largely of his own views and feelings and sufferings in promoting the cause of Christ and the interests of his friends. And when he had wrought his own mind up to a high pitch of tenderness, he breaks forth in this pathetic language, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is opened unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence of the same, I speak as unto my children, be ye also enlarged." The gospel had enlarged the heart of the apostle and he supposed

it had a tendency to enlarge the hearts of the Corinthians, who had embraced it. His views and feelings were once confined to himself and to those persons and objects, which were the most nearly connected with his private, personal interests. But after he had heard and understood and loved the gospel, his heart expanded and he felt interested in every thing comprised in the great and benevolent scheme of man's redemption.—And from this we may conclude,

That the gospel has a tendency to enlarge the hearts of all, who embrace it. I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by the heart's being enlarged; And,

II. Show that the gospel directly tends to enlarge the hearts of those, who embrace it.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by the heart's being enlarged.

The heart is something different from all the natural powers, or faculties of the mind and consists in free voluntary exercises, emotions, or affections; and its magnitude is always in proportion to the ultimate and supreme objects, upon which it terminates. Every moral agent has some ultimate and supreme object in view, which is comparatively small or great; and this object be it what it may, measures the magnitude of the heart. Self is the ultimate and supreme object of affection in every unsanctified heart. Every person in the state of nature desires and seeks his own separate, personal interest, or happiness above all other objects; but every one, whose heart is renewed and sanctified, has a superior regard to the interest, or happiness of any other person, or being whose interest, or happiness appears of more importance than his own. But

whether the heart be selfish, or benevolent, it is either large, or small, in exact proportion to the largeness, or smallness of the objects, upon which it terminates. The heart of every one extends just as far as his apparent interest extends, and increases in magnitude just as the knowledge of his interest increases, whether his interest be selfish, or benevolent. The heart of a child increases, as his knowledge increases. The heart of a youth increases, as his knowledge increases. The heart of a man increases, as his knowledge increases. There is nothing perceived by the understanding, but what affects the heart more or less. Men's hearts increase and enlarge, as their capacities, their relations, their connections and spheres of actions increase and multiply. Though their is undoubtedly a real difference in the natural capacities of mankind, yet they all admit of perpetual cultivation and enlargement. It is recorded of Christ, that he increased in wisdom and stature, as well as in favor with God and man. In childhood the capacity is comparatively small; and the heart bears a near proportion to the capacity. This the apostle testifies of himself. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." And he might have added, that he felt as a child. His heart was no larger than his capacity. It is equally true of every person, through the whole course of his life, that his heart is bounded by his capacity. But as every person, from childhood to manhood, derives advantage from education, observation and experience, so his capacity, and consequently his heart must gradually enlarge. And after men come upon the stage of life, their relations, connections and spheres of action increase and multiply, and of course,

their minds and hearts expand. More numerous and more important objects gain their attention and interest their feelings. When David was a shepherd, his mind and his heart were as small as his flock. When he became a general, his mind and his heart were as large as his army. And when he ascended the throne of Israel, his mind and his heart were enlarged in proportion to the number of his subjects, the extent of his kingdom and the important interests of the nation. And it is expressly said of Solomon, that the largeness of his heart was equal to the capacity and strength of his mind. "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart, even as the sand, that is on the sea shore." These were uncommon instances of the progress of the human mind and human heart; yet they are just and beautiful illustrations of the gradual growth of the understanding and heart of every person in the world. The understanding of all men enlarges from stage to stage in life, and their hearts enlarge with the growth of their intellectual powers. It is true, indeed, the heart does not always keep pace with the progress of the capacity and knowledge. The reason is, some men do not interest themselves so much in what they know as others do, and consequently their hearts do not enlarge with equal rapidity.

Every man regards and pursues some supreme object; and if his supreme object be low, mean, or unimportant, it will contract his mind and feelings in respect to all other objects, which are only subservient to that which is supreme. The man, who makes property his supreme object, sees nothing in the universe superior to property and esteems nothing important, but

what tends to promote property. The man, who makes amusements his supreme object, sees nothing superior to amusements and values every thing according to its tendency to promote and secure the frivolous objects of his wishes. Let such men have as much information as they will, their hearts must be small, in comparison with what they would have been, if they had placed their supreme attention and affection upon greater and nobler objects, whether of a temporal, or spiritual nature. In a word, it may be laid down as a maxim, that every man's heart is in proportion to what he esteems his highest interest. This every man knows to be so, by his own experience. No man values himself more than his highest interest. And no man values another any more, than he supposes his highest interest to be. Hence the hearts of men increase and enlarge as fast and no faster than their capacities and knowledge increase. Solomon says, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he, that loveth abundance, with increase." Every person wishes to increase his highest interest, whether he places his interest in temporal, or spiritual good. And the more his mind expands, the more important his highest interest will appear and the more his heart will be enlarged, whether it be holy, or unholy. As a man's heart is always where his treasure is, so his heart is as large and no larger than his supposed treasure. It is as easy to conceive of the largeness of a man's heart, as to conceive of the largeness of his interest. I now proceed to show,

II. That the gospel has a direct tendency to enlarge the hearts of those, who embrace it. The gospel comprises the highest good of the universe; or it is that

wise and benevolent scheme, which God concerted from eternity to promote the highest happiness and holiness of the intellectual system; and those, who embrace the gospel, cordially approve of this great and good design. Their hearts unite with the heart of God and they feel as he feels towards himself and all his rational creatures. They love the good, that he loves; and desire to have it promoted in the very way, that he has proposed in the gospel to promote it. The apostle says, that God created all things according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus; and that he will, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. It is the great and glorious design of the gospel, to bring all good beings to the most perfect union and happiness, or to put them into the everlasting possession of all good through the medium of Christ. As soon, therefore as any of the human race become cordially united to Christ, they embrace the gospel and become interested in all the blessings contained in it. The discovery and choice of this great good immediately expands their hearts. This our Savior represents as the immediate effect of embracing the gospel. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when he hath found, he hideth and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls: who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Those, who embrace the gospel, immediately discover and secure that kingdom of God, which is the sum and comprehension of all good. Ac-

cordingly, they are represented as being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ to the same common and comprehensive interest of the universe. This is the language of Paul to the christians in Corinth.— "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Now, the gospel which thus enlarges the interests of those, who embrace it, must have a direct and perpetual tendency to enlarge their hearts. For their hearts necessarily expand in proportion to their knowledge of their great and ever-growing interests. Here it seems proper to enter into particulars and point out the various respects, in which the gospel never fails to enlarge the hearts of those, who embrace it. And,

1. It tends to enlarge their hearts towards God.— It is the gospel, which gives the fullest and brightest display of his glory. It unfolds his designs, records his conduct, expresses his feelings and makes the most perfect discovery of all his great and amiable perfections. It represents him as creating, upholding and governing all things and filling the whole universe with his presence and goodness. So far as any of mankind, therefore, understand and love the gospel, just so far their hearts are enlarged towards God, the greatest and best of beings. They feel interested in his existence, in his perfections and in his blessedness; yea, all their interests centre in him. It is the language of their hearts, Whom have we in heaven but him; and their is none on earth that we desire besides him. And as the gospel continually opens more and more the character, perfections and operations of the Deity; so

it serves continually to enlarge the hearts of believers towards him. As they grow in the knowledge of the gospel, they grow in the knowledge of God which never fails to expand and enlarge their hearts in every holy and devout affection. They feel more and more interested in his glory and in every thing, which tends to promote it.

2. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards Christ. He is the great and glorious personage, who is no where revealed, but in the gospel. The light of nature discovers no Savior for sinners. But the gospel reveals Christ, the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, as assuming human nature, and in that nature, suffering and dying on the cross, to atone for the sins of the world, and render it consistent with all the perfections of God, the Father, to pardon and save the guilty children of men. It represents this same Savior as possessed of every divine attribute, as seated at the right hand of God and as head over all things to the church. It displays his astonishing grace and condescension in laying down his life, that all true believers might live and reign with him forever. As their knowledge of the gospel, therefore increases, their love, their gratitude and their whole hearts are enlarged towards Christ. He appears more amiable, more glorious and infinitely more worthy of admiration and esteem, than any or all created beings. He appears to be the perfection of beauty and excellence, and altogether lovely. Accordingly, the apostle prayed, that the hearts of believers might be enlarged through faith in Christ. He besought God to grant "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend

with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." Thus the gospel directly tends to enlarge the hearts of believers by exhibiting to their view the great and glorious character of Christ, and what he has done and suffered for their good and the good of the universe.

3. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards the church of Christ. Those, who embrace the gospel, embrace all, who apparently belong to the number of his friends and followers. They are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. And they are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. Those, who are united to Christ through faith in the gospel, are also united with his whole family in heaven and earth ; and with all, who have been and shall be redeemed from among men. The gospel leads all who embrace it, to extend their love of complacency to all the members of the church of Christ, whether they sit together in earthly, or heavenly places. If one of these members rejoice, they all rejoice with it ; or if one of these members suffer, they all suffer with it. Their enlarged hearts take in all the friends of Christ, in every age, and in every part of the world. Every true believer can say with David, " If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief

joy." And as the gospel continually enlarges the views of christians in regard to the church, so it continually enlarges their hearts towards it and makes them feel more deeply interested in its prosperity.

4. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards all mankind. The gospel is founded in universal benevolence and tends to diffuse the same spirit in the hearts of all, who embrace it. Paul's heart was once confined to his own personal interest, but as soon as he embraced the gospel, his heart was enlarged in benevolence towards all the nations of the earth. His heart's desire and prayer to God was, that both Jews and gentiles might know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. The gospel still has the same effect upon all who cordially embrace it. They feel interested in the temporal and eternal good of all mankind. Their benevolent hearts are continually expanding towards all nations, as their knowledge of their perishing condition increases. It is the gracious design of the gospel to spread holiness and happiness among all nations ; and those, who embrace it, cordially approve of this design ; and their hearts extend as far as the design of the gospel extends and dispose them to seek and promote the salvation of perishing sinners all over the world. They feel as angels feel in respect to the success of the gospel, who rejoice when one sinner repenteth, when one addition is made to the number of Christ's friends and when one soul is saved from the wrath to come.

5. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards all created beings, whether holy or unholy, and towards every living creature. The righteous man regards the good of every creature capable of enjoying

good, from the highest angel to the smallest insect.—These all belong to God and are a part of his interest. He regards with an equal and impartial eye all his intelligent and unintelligent creatures. And as all these are employed to promote the design of the gospel; so those, who embrace it feel interested in every created being in the universe. God has employed all the angels, good and bad, to carry into effect the gracious design of the gospel. And he has constantly employed the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven, as well as every human creature, to promote the same important end. Hence every creature is really valuable as connected with the gospel; and therefore all, who embrace it, must feel their hearts enlarged to encircle in the arms of their benevolence, all the creatures of God.

6. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers to take an interest in all the events, that ever have been and ever will be brought to pass. They all stand inseparably connected with the great and extensive design of the gospel: which assures believers that all things are theirs, whether past, present, or to come and shall eventually work together for their good. They must feel interested in that great transaction in eternity, when the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost concerted the great scheme of redemption. They must feel interested in the creation, preservation, and government of the world; in all past and present events, which come to their knowledge; in all the events predicted in the scriptures of truth; in the transactions of the last day and in all the future scenes of eternity. Every true believer has an important interest in every thing, that has existed and that ever will exist. And so far as he understands and loves the gospel, his heart is

growing more and more extensive, as his real interests appear to increase. And it is the direct tendency of the gospel to enlarge his heart, until it extends to the utmost bounds of creation and feels interested in every created and uncreated object.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the gospel tends to enlarge the views and hearts of those, who embrace it; then unbelievers have no just ground to object against it, as enfeebling the minds and contracting the hearts of men. They have often and strenuously objected against the gospel, as having a tendency to belittle and enfeeble both the natural and moral powers of the mind, and to unfit mankind for great and noble actions; and for this reason they wish it might be disbelieved, rejected and banished out of the world. Nor is this opinion confined to professed infidels, but is adopted by many, who profess to believe the gospel. How many men of eminence, in both public and private stations, who are in the sanguine pursuit of what they deem great and noble objects, are very averse from embracing the gospel, because they imagine it would contract their views, cool their zeal and weaken their exertions to obtain the great things they have in hope and prospect? How many parents are afraid, that their children should embrace the gospel and become serious and religious, which they imagine would restrain them from vanity and ambition and prevent them from making their fortunes, and raising their reputation in the view of the world? And how many of the rising generation neglect and oppose religion for the sake of appearing more gay, more sprightly, more manly and more noble in the eyes of those, whose fa-

vor they wish to secure? But this objection, made by so many against the gospel, is absolutely groundless, absurd and criminal. For it appears from what has been said, that the gospel has a direct tendency to enlarge the heart and expand the views, the hopes and prospects of all, who embrace it. And this is confirmed by innumerable instances of its expanding and ennobling influence upon the understandings and hearts of men. Did it not enlarge the heart and invigorate the mind of young Moses, of young Joseph, of young Joshua, of young Samuel, of young David, of young Solomon, of young Josiah, of young Jabez, of young Daniel, and of young Paul? Whoever had greater and nobler objects in view, than these pious young men? or whoever pursued their great and noble objects, with more zeal, fortitude, resolution, wisdom and success? Whoever made a greater and better figure on the stage of life? or whoever went off the stage of life with more dignity, or brighter hopes and prospects? Do you ask, how the gospel produced such great and good effects upon the minds of these pious men? The answer is plain and intelligible. It caused them to renounce low, mean, vain, trifling objects and raised their attention to divine and eternal objects, which expanded their views and enlarged their hearts and fired their zeal to promote the glory of God and the everlasting good of their fellow-men. And it is the natural tendency of the gospel to produce such happy effects, in a greater or less degree, upon the hearts and lives of all, who embrace it. How happy would it be for the young and the old, the high and the low, to embrace the gospel, which would make them wise and great and useful and happy in time and eternity!

2. If the gospel tends to enlarge the hearts of those who embrace it; then we see why the scripture represents believers as far more amiable and excellent than unbelievers. God, who perfectly knows the worth, the excellence and importance of all classes of men, represents saints as far more amiable, excellent and valuable than sinners. He says, "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." He says "the saints are the excellent of the earth." He calls them his jewels, his treasure, his inheritance, his glory. He measures the greatness, the goodness and the worth of men by their hearts; and according to this standard, sinners are lighter than vanity, in comparison with the righteous, whose understandings are expanded and whose hearts are enlarged, by the great truths and great objects exhibited in the gospel. How superior was Moses to Pharaoh, Mordecai to Haman and Paul to the philosophers of Athens? God weighs men in an equal balance; and when the greatest, the wisest, the richest and best of sinners are weighed in his balance, they are all found wanting, and are as chaff to the wheat, in comparison with saints. When Belshazzar was thrown into the balance with Daniel, he was lighter than a feather in comparison with that great and good man. The heart of the greatest and best sinner in the world is small, mean and contracted, in comparison with the benevolent, enlarged heart of the least saint on earth. The largest heart, that any sinner ever possessed and carried about with him, was never larger than a part, or the whole of this small, changeable and perishing world; but the heart of the least christian is as large and boundless as eternity. His love is eternal love; his hope is an eternal hope; his

inheritance is an eternal inheritance and his joy is an eternal joy; but the love, the hope, the inheritance and joy of the sinner is temporary and but a preface to everlasting sorrow and despair. How different will the righteous and wicked appear, when their hearts shall be disclosed in another world! Then the righteous will shine forth in all the beauties of benevolence in the kingdom of their Father, while the wicked will appear in all the meanness and turpitude of selfishness. It will then be made manifest, that God did not represent saints in too good, nor sinners in too bad a light, in his word. He knew the essential difference between them before, as well as he did after they left the world and he drew their characters according to that essential distinction. And though sinners denied the distinction in time, they will be constrained to acknowledge it to all eternity.

3. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those, who embrace it; then they sincerely desire that the gospel may be universally known and embraced. Before the gospel had enlarged the heart of the apostle Paul, he was perfectly opposed to the spread of the gospel and to its happy influence upon the hearts of men. His heart was so selfish and contracted, that he had no concern for the salvation of his own, or any other nation; but did all in his power to prevent the spread of the gospel and its happy influence upon the hearts of men. But as soon as the gospel had illuminated his understanding and enlarged his own heart, it was his heart's desire and prayer to God, not only that his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh might be saved, but, that the gospel might be carried all round the world and produce its saving influence upon all the

nations of the earth. His benevolent heart esteemed it a privilege to be employed in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to Jews and gentiles. His heart was so large that he could wish to sacrifice both his temporal and eternal interests, if that might be the means of spreading the knowledge and the saving benefits of the gospel among his own and other nations. The gospel expanded the views and enlarged the hearts of all the other apostles and primitive christians and fired their zeal to labor, suffer and die for the sake of the gospel and the salvation of a world lying in wickedness. And the same gospel has produced the same benevolent and enlarged views, desires and exertions of those, who have ever since clearly understood and cordially embraced it. Who have done so much to gain the low, mean, momentary objects of this world, as christians have done to spread the gospel to promote religion, and to save the souls of men? The believers of the gospel have sacrificed their property, their reputation and in ten thousand instances, their lives, in seeking to enlighten the minds, extend the views and enlarge the hearts of the *high* and *low triflers* on the stage of action. They are grieved to see the narrow views and feelings and conduct of the men of the world, who never spend a thought upon the greatest and best objects in the universe, and never felt, nor expressed, nor enjoyed the ennobling and benevolent spirit of the gospel. You remember the noble and happy effect, which the gospel had upon Zaccheus, the very day he embraced it. He promptly and cheerfully gave away one half of his goods; and it is not very improbable, that it disposed him to give away another half before he died. Primitive christians took the

spoiling of their goods cheerfully, knowing that they had a more enduring substance laid up for them in heaven. Those, who understand and love the gospel, place their happiness in the happiness of others and desire above all things, that others should enjoy the same spirit and blessings of the gospel, which they possess and enjoy. Having entered into the gospel kingdom, they most sincerely and ardently desire to bring as many others into it as they can.

4. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those, who embrace it; then they know by experience that they cannot serve God and mammon. As soon as their hearts are enlarged towards God, towards Christ, towards his great and glorious kingdom and towards all the human race, these great objects croud out of their views and affections all inferior objects, or dispose them to give them only their low and subordinate place. They no longer occupy the supreme place in their hearts and are regarded only as means of promoting objects infinitely greater and more valuable. Believers are conscious, that two supreme objects cannot exist in their minds at one and the same time. They are conscious that whenever they love the world and the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in them.— They feel bound in duty to watch their hearts and keep them with all diligence, lest the low and trivial objects of the world should engross their attention and affections supremely, becloud their minds and hide from their view and contemplation the glorious scenes and objects of the heavenly world. Herein sincere believers differ from insincere believers. Insincere believers desire and endeavor to serve both God and mammon. They mean to serve God as much as they imagine, it

will help them to gain and enjoy the world and no more. When the service of God comes in competition with the service of mammon, they mean to neglect the service of God. But sincere believers feel and act differently. They will not neglect the service of God, to serve themselves. They mean to keep their hearts in subjection to God, and the world in subjection to their hearts. They maintain a constant warfare between benevolence and selfishness and always loathe and condemn themselves, whenever their selfishness gains the ascendency over their benevolence. Though Paul delighted in the law of God, after the inward man, yet he found a law, that when he would do good, evil was present with him, which made him exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Whatever withdraws their hearts from God and his service is burdensome and hateful to real christians.

5. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those, who embrace it; then they sincerely and ardently desire to know more and more about it. "As new born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." As soon as the understanding of any person is enlightened and his heart is enlarged, he immediately desires to know more and more about Christ, about God, about the moral state of this world and the moral state of the invisible and eternal world. And as the heart of every believer enlarges, his desires after greater and greater knowledge of God and divine truths continually increase. Though Paul had as clear and extensive knowledge of the gospel as any man, yet he regretted his remaining ignorance of it and ardently desired and endeavored to make greater advances

in the knowledge of it. And this is true of every true believer. He finds that the knowledge of the gospel extends his views and enlarges his heart towards God and all his works of creation, providence and grace. It is a dark sign, that any person has not rightly understood and embraced the gospel, if he imagines, that he has attained to a perfection of knowledge and grace. The more a man has seen and known of this world the more he desires to see and know of it; and the more those who have embraced the gospel, know of it the more they desire to know of it. As it enlarges their hearts and extends their views, they see more and more to be known of God, of Christ and of every thing, which stands connected with the great work of redemption, which he has undertaken, has carried on, and will continue to carry on, until it is fully and finally accomplished.

6. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those who embrace it; then it enables them to perform all the duties which it requires with great pleasure and delight. David says to God, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of benevolence towards all beings in the universe and a spirit of complacence towards all holy, amiable and virtuous beings. And every one knows it is a pleasure to perform any duty towards one, to whom he feels benevolently; and every one knows it is a pleasure to perform any duty towards one, to whom he exercises the love of complacence. The love of benevolence and the love of complacence, which the gospel inspires, prepares all who embrace it, to discharge every duty that it requires with pleasure and alacrity. It is a pleasure to those, who love God

supremely, to obey God universally. Christ loved God and therefore delighted to do his will. It is a pleasure to those, whose hearts are enlarged towards Christ, to obey all his commands. And it is a pleasure to all, whose hearts are enlarged towards the whole world, to perform every duty which the gospel requires them to perform towards even the enemies of all righteousness. The spirit of the gospel prepares all, who embrace it, to obey it.

Finally, let all inquire whether they have ever embraced the gospel. This subject proposes an infallible test. Has it enlarged your hearts towards God, towards Christ, towards the friends of Christ, towards the cause of Christ and towards the enemies of Christ? What have you done more than others? What have you desired more than others? what are you willing to do more than others, who do not pretend to embrace the gospel? Have you been more obedient? or have you been more benevolent?

SERMON XIX.

PRAYER OF SAINTS FOR THE CONSTANT EXERCISE OF HOLY AFFECTIONS.

PSALM, LXXXVI. 11.—*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*

The name of God in this, as in many other places of scripture, is expressive of the whole of the divine character and perfections. The fear of his name denotes that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom and which comprises all that love, esteem, veneration, homage and obedience, which are due from man to his creator. David's petition, therefore, appears to be a request, that God would prepare his heart to worship and serve him in a sincere and acceptable manner. But if this were his meaning, it may seem strange, that he should conceive his prayer in such uncommon and unintelligible terms. For where is the propriety of praying for an united heart? Is not the heart always united? Is it not something simple, undivided and incapable of being *disunited* and consequently of being *united*? If he had prayed, that God would give him a good heart, a pure heart, a clean heart, or a wise and understanding heart, his expressions would have been easy and familiar and his meaning plain and obvious; but when he prays that God would unite his heart to fear his name, it is not so easy to apprehend the propriety of the phrase, or the meaning of

the petition. To set this good man's prayer in a plain and profitable light, I shall endeavor to show,

I. That a good man has but one heart;

II. What his heart is;

III. That it needs to be united; And,

IV. That it is proper to pray, that it may be united.

I. I am to show that a good man has not two hearts.

Though none may have said in so many words, that a good man has two hearts; yet many have said what implies it. They have often asserted, that a saint has an old heart and a new heart; that he has an old sinful principle and a new gracious principle; that he has an old selfish disposition and a new benevolent disposition; and that he has an old bad taste and a new good taste. All these expressions convey the same idea and imply that every one, who has been born again, or has experienced a saving change, has both a holy and unholy heart, or both a holy and unholy principle, or both a holy and unholy disposition, or both a holy and unholy taste; which amounts to his having both a good and bad heart, at the same time. That this is their real meaning appears from their denying, that a new heart takes away any part of an old heart; or that a new principle takes away any part of an old principle, or that a new disposition takes away any part of an old disposition, or that a new taste takes away any part of an old taste. They suppose, that the old heart, or the old principle, or the old disposition, or the old taste, remains entirely the same after, as before regeneration. This supposition plainly and necessarily implies, that every real christian, or sub-

ject of grace, has two hearts. But David was not of this opinion. He did not suppose, that he had two hearts. He does not pray, that God would unite his old and new heart, or his old and new principle, or his old and new disposition, or his old and new taste; but his one, only heart. Nor do we find a single instance in the bible, of any good man's asserting, pretending, or saying any thing, which implied, that he had two hearts. It is no less absurd to say my *hearts*, than to say my *understandings*, or my *consciences*; but there would be no absurdity in this mode of expression, if the old heart remains the same, after a new heart is given in regeneration. The truth is, the new heart destroys the old heart; so that a person *after* regeneration, as well as *before*, has but one heart. Accordingly, God says to his sinful people in Babylon, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give an heart of flesh." Here the giving of a new heart is represented as the same thing as the taking away of the old heart. And the apostle tells christians, that by putting on the *new* man, they had put off the *old* man: and that by walking in the spirit, they did not walk in the flesh. In a word, the whole current of scripture represents a good heart, as excluding a bad heart: so that a good heart and a bad heart never exist in the same mind, at the same time. It is, therefore, as contrary to scripture, as to reason and common sense, that a good man ever has two hearts. I now proceed to show,

II. What his one heart is.

As the eye, by which we discover external objects, seldom discovers itself; so the soul, by which we dis-

cover other things, seldom turns its attention inward, to survey its own powers or faculties. And this is one reason why we find it more difficult to distinguish and describe the properties of the soul, than the properties of the body. We know, however, that the soul has neither length, nor breadth, nor figure, nor visibility, nor any other property of matter; and consequently, we know, that it is not a *material*, but a *spiritual* substance. As the soul is all spirit, so it is all activity. We can form no idea of a dormant, inactive spirit. Separate activity from the soul, and its existence is no longer conceivable. But though the soul be all spirit and activity, yet we are conscious of its distinct powers or properties. We are conscious of having perception, reason, conscience, memory, and volition. These are the essential properties of the soul; and in these properties the essence of the soul consists. We can form no conception of the soul as distinct from these properties, or as the foundation of them. The essential properties of the soul constitute its essence, as much as the essential properties of matter constitute the essence of matter. This is true and is acknowledged to be true, by a late celebrated author. Now, if perception be distinct from reason, and reason be distinct from conscience, and conscience be distinct from memory, and memory be distinct from volition; then the heart must consist in volition, or free voluntary, moral exercise, and in nothing previous to it, or the foundation of it.

We never attach praise or blame to the exercise of perception, or reason, or conscience, or memory; but we do attach praise or blame to the free, voluntary exercise of loving or hating, of choosing or refusing,

The heart, therefore, which is the seat of all moral exercises, consists in nothing but moral exercises. It certainly does not consist in perception, or reason, or conscience, or memory; for these are all natural faculties, which are totally destitute of every moral quality, to which praise or blame can be attached; but it may and does consist in loving and hating, in choosing and refusing; for these are free, voluntary exercises, which are always right or wrong, and worthy of praise, or blame. Neither reason, nor scripture affords any ground to suppose, that the heart consists in a principle, or disposition, or taste, which is the root, or source, or foundation of all free and voluntary exercises. We never approve or disapprove of any thing in ourselves or others, but free, voluntary exercises; and God requires and forbids nothing but free and voluntary exercises in his word. All that the divine law requires summarily consists in pure benevolence; and all it summarily forbids consists in pure selfishness. Benevolence is a free, voluntary exercise; and selfishness is a free, voluntary exercise; and every human heart consists in a train of free, voluntary, benevolent exercises, or in a train of free, voluntary, selfish exercises, or in a train of both benevolent and selfish exercises. A sinner's heart consists in a train of mere selfish affections; but a saint's heart consists in a train of both benevolent and selfish exercises. The best of saints are imperfectly holy in this life; and their imperfection in holiness consists in their sometimes having holy and sometimes unholy affections. Their holy and unholy affections are always distinct, and never blended together. Their holy exercises are never partly holy and partly unholy, but perfectly holy; and their unholy

exercises are never partly holy, but perfectly unholy. A train of holy and unholy affections forms the heart of a saint; but a train of constant, uninterrupted, sinful affections forms the heart of a sinner. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil, only evil continually. The only proper notion of any human heart, as distinguished from all the powers or faculties of the mind, is a series of free, voluntary exercises or affections. And the only proper idea of a good man's heart, as distinguished from the heart of a sinner, is a train of both holy and unholy affections, or exercises. So that the heart of a saint essentially differs from the heart of a sinner in this one respect, that the heart of a saint has some holy, as well as unholy exercises; but the heart of a sinner has no holy exercises at all. The next thing to be shown is,

III. That the heart of the saint needs to be united.

This appears from the description, which has been given of his heart. It is composed of a series of both good and evil exercises, which are distinct from, and diametrically opposite to each other. His good exercises, therefore, may be *disunited* from one another, by the intervention of evil exercises; and then his heart is *divided*. When his good exercises follow one another, in a constant succession, without any interruption by evil exercises; then his heart may be said to be *united*; but when his good affections are interrupted by those of a directly opposite nature; then his heart is *ununited* and discomposed. The constant succession of good exercises may be sometimes longer, and sometimes shorter. Good men may be in the fear of the Lord, or in the exercise of holy affections, from day to day, and from time to time, for a

long period, with very few interruptions. Or their good exercises may be interrupted from day to day, and from hour to hour, by evil exercises, for an indefinite time. A number of good affections may be followed by an equal or a smaller number of evil affections; or one good affection may be followed with one evil affection, in a rapid succession. In all these cases, the hearts of saints may be said to be *disunited*.—Such interruption in the succession of their holy exercises, they all experience. They find their hearts divided, and first drawn one way, and then another; first fixed upon God, and then upon the world. This was evidently the case with David, when he prayed to God and said, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." It is owing to the contrariety of affections in the hearts of good men, that they are so often required to act with a *perfect* heart, with the *whole* heart, and with *all* the heart; and that they are so often blamed for acting *not with a perfect* heart. While Caleb, Hezekiah, Job, and other good men, persevered in obedience to the divine commands, they are said to serve God with a *perfect* heart; but when Amaziah sometimes did, and sometimes did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, he is said to serve him, but not with a *perfect heart*. When good men act from discordant motives, they act from a disunited and imperfect heart. And how often do they find upon reflection, this mark of their moral imperfection! But if their good affections followed one another in a constant and uninterrupted succession, their hearts would be united; and being united, would be absolutely perfect. The perfect holiness of Adam in his primitive state wholly consisted in the constant and uninterrupted succession

of his holy affections. The perfect holiness of just men in heaven consists in the constant and uninterrupted succession of their holy affections. Nor could there be the least moral imperfection in the hearts of good men in this world, if their affections were constantly holy, without any interruption by affections of an opposite and sinful nature. The reason, why the heart of a good man needs to be *united*, is because it is disunited by a contrariety of affections, and not because his affections are too weak, or low, or languid. If this were the case, there could be no propriety in desiring, as David did, that his heart might be *united*; but only that his heart might be *strengthened*; or his gracious affections raised to a higher degree of ardour. But if every holy affection be perfectly holy, without any mixture of sin; then the only way to raise the ardour of a holy heart, is to make the succession of holy affections more constant and less interrupted; or in other words, to *unite* one holy affection so intimately with another, that there should be no time, nor room, for any sinful affection to intervene, interrupt, or cool the ardour of divine love. Having shown that it is necessary, that a good man's heart should be united: it only remains to show,

IV. That there is a propriety in his praying, that God would *unite* his heart.

All good men are conscious of their imperfections in holiness, and of their dependance upon God to carry on the good work, which he has begun in their hearts, whether their hearts consist in mere voluntary, moral exercises, or not. They are more willing than other men to acknowledge, that their hearts are in the hand of God, who can turn them whithersoever he

pleaseth, as the rivers of water are turned; that the preparations of their hearts and the answer of their tongues, are from the Lord; and that it is God, who worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. There is, then, no occasion of showing the propriety of their praying to God in general, for the sanctifying influences of his Spirit; but there is occasion, in this discourse, of showing the propriety of their praying to God in particular, that he would *unite their hearts* to fear his name, or to obey his commands. The propriety of this arises from their hearts being *disunited*, by a *contrariety* in their affections. On this ground, David felt the propriety of constantly praying to God, to unite his heart in holy affections, which he found were continually liable to be interrupted and disunited by selfish and sinful affections. He prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me." Again he prays, "Quicken thou me according to thy word. I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Again he cries, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Each of these petitions implies, that he desired God to unite his disunited heart, by producing new holy affections in it, and thereby excluding unholy affections from it. And it is proper, that every good man should make the same petition, that God would *unite* his *disunited* heart, by producing new holy affections in it. For,

1. Every christian finds, that his heart is more or less *disunited*, in the manner that has been described. He finds, that not only his love, his fear, his faith and other gracious affections are sometimes what he calls

low and languid, but actually interrupted, by directly opposite exercises. He finds opposition, instead of submission; unbelief, instead of faith; the love of the world, instead of love to God; and aversion to duty, instead of delight in it. These are positive exercises of sinful affections, which are diametrically opposed to positive exercises of grace. He knows by sensible experience, that his holy affections are not merely low and languid, but actually interrupted and excluded by the existence and interference of sinful affections, which divide and distract his heart, and disturb his peace and comfort in every duty and enjoyment. Now, nothing can remove this painful *effect*, without removing the cause; and nothing can remove the cause, but the removal of sinful affections; and nothing can remove *sinful* affections, but *gracious* affections; and nothing can *unite* the heart, but the increase of *gracious* affections. If it be proper, therefore, that christians should pray, that they may delightfully, constantly, and faithfully perform every duty; then it is proper, that they should pray, that God would *unite their hearts*, by giving them such holy affections, as will exclude every sinful exercise. This leads me to observe,

2. That it is proper for christians to pray, that God would *unite* their *disunited* hearts, because no external means or motives will produce this effect, without his *special* influence. They may read the bible, hear the gospel preached and constantly attend all external duties and divine ordinances and be tried with both mercies and afflictions, and still their hearts remain disunited, unless God exerts his special power to produce gracious affections in them. No external means or

motives can produce holy love, or holy fear, or holy faith, or any other holy affection, without the special and powerful exertion of divine grace. As it exclusively belongs to God, to produce the *first*, so it exclusively belongs to him, to produce the *second*, and *every succeeding* exercise of grace in the heart of a christian. It appears from the experience and language of one of the best of men, that though he sought, he never found perfection in holiness in his probationary state. Paul says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are *behind*, and reaching forth unto those things which are *before*, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Such perfections in holiness he ardently desired, in order that his *disunited* heart might be *united* and freed from the distressing conflict between his holy and unholy affections. He says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He knew, that no speculative knowledge, that no external means or motives, could remove his inward conflict, his spiritual warfare, and give him that peace, which the world could not give, nor take away. He felt the propriety and necessity of praying, that God would renew, enlarge and purify his heart, by more constantly producing and increasing right affections in it. If the speculative knowledge, which Paul possessed and the means of grace, which he enjoyed, were insufficient to produce those holy affections, which were necessary to *unite* his *dis-*

united heart ; then no christian has any ground to depend upon the speculative knowledge, which he possesses, and the means of grace, which he enjoys, to *unite* his *disunited* heart. The moral imperfection of every christian throws him into the sovereign hand of God to mould and form his heart, as he sees fit. And this renders it not only proper, but necessary, that every christian should pray, that, God would *unite* his *disunited* heart and give him that peace, which passeth all understanding. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, in the christian race, but of God that sheweth mercy. The strongest, as well as the weakest christians, are equally and constantly dependent upon God, to give them more love, more faith, more submission, more zeal, and more fortitude to fight the good fight of faith, to perform every good work, and to finish their course with joy.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If every christian has but one heart and that heart consists in moral *exercises* ; then no person is *passive* in regeneration. Those, who maintain, that men are *passive* in regeneration, found their opinion entirely upon the supposition, that in regeneration a new *principle*, *dispositon*, or *taste*, is created in the mind, which is prior to, and the foundation of all holy exercises. And were this supposition true, it would be equally true, that men are *passive*, and *not active* in regeneration. If a new principle, or a new disposition, or a new taste, be produced in their mind, without their activity, and previous to their exercising love, or faith, or any other holy affection ; then they must be entirely *passive* in passing from spiritual death to spirit-

ual life. But if every human heart, whether good or evil, consists in moral exercises; then there is no occasion of God's implanting a new, dormant, passive principle in regeneration, in order to produce a new holy heart. In order to give a man a new heart, all that needs to be done is to produce new holy affections, in which he must necessarily be *active*. We cannot conceive, that a man should be turned from sin to holiness, without his own activity, in exercising holy affections, instead of sinful ones. Were it true, that men are *passive* in regeneration, there would be no propriety, in God's requiring them to make a *new* heart and a new spirit; or in requiring them to exercise love, repentance, faith, or any other holy affection, until he had actually produced a new passive principle in their minds. For, if a new heart consisted in a new *passive* principle, it would be as absolutely and naturally impossible for them to make a new heart, as to make a new understanding, or any other new natural faculty of the mind. But if a new heart consists in new holy affections, then there is the same propriety in God's requiring sinners to make a new heart, as in requiring them to *love* him, instead of *hating* him. It is impossible to see the justice of the divine law, or the distinction between men's *natural* and *moral* inability to love God, without understanding wherein a good heart consists, and what God does in producing it. If a good heart consists in good *exercises*, and if in producing it, God produces nothing but good *exercises*, in which men are *active*; then it is easy to reconcile the doctrine of regeneration with the precepts of the divine law, and the moral obligation of all sinners to obey it. But the doctrine of

passive regeneration is repugnant to reason, conscience, and every command in the bible.

2. If a good heart consists in good affections, which are continually liable to be interrupted, by affections of an opposite nature ; then it is easy to see wherein the *deceitfulness* of the heart consists. It is a common complaint, that the heart is *deceitful*, and scripture represents it to be extremely so ; yea, as deceitful above all things. And on this account, Solomon asserts, that "he, who trusteth in his own heart, is a fool." The assertion is indefinite and unlimited and applies to all men, whether saints, or sinners. If the heart consisted in a mere dormant, inactive principle, it could not be deceitful, nor properly be called deceitful. But if it consists in moral, free, voluntary exercises ; then it may be deceitful, and its deceitfulness may be discovered. Its deceitfulness consists in its *mutability*. It is as unstable as water. It is every moment liable to change. Good men never know beforehand, how soon the best motions of their hearts may be interrupted, by directly opposite exercises. They may feel right, intend right, resolve right to-day ; but to-morrow their good feelings, good intentions, and good resolutions, may be superceded and excluded by directly opposite views and motives. To-day they may form and resolve to execute some noble, benevolent, and extensively useful design ; but to-morrow, or next week, they may give it up, from low and mercenary motives. In this respect, St. Paul found his heart to be deceitful. For, says he, "to *will* is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I *would*, I do not ; but the evil that I *would* not, that I do." In the same manner Peter's

heart deceived him. When Christ expressly told his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem, and be crucified and slain by wicked hands, Peter's love to him grew warm and kindled into a flame of pious zeal. He felt the spirit of a martyr, and boldly declared, that he would rather die, than that such things should be done to his master. And there can be no doubt, but that at that time, he would have fulfilled his resolutions, and laid down his life for Christ. For when Judas and his company arrested him in the garden, Peter drew his sword, and would have cut off the *head*, as well as ear, of the high priest's servant, had not Christ required him to exercise patience, rather than courage, and to use spiritual, rather than carnal weapons. But after Christ was taken and carried before the tribunal of his mortal enemies, Peter's love and zeal failed him, and with a false tongue, and a wicked heart, he profanely denied his Master. While Peter felt a pure love and zeal for Christ, he thought his love and zeal would continue, but the instability of his heart deceived him. And Paul, while in the exercise of good affections, was ready to imagine, that his good affections would continue unshaken; but he found by painful experience, that his good intentions and resolutions deceived him, by their mutability. In the same manner, it seems Hazael's heart deceived him. When the prophet, with tears in his eyes, told him what evils he would do, he had no intention, nor expectation, that he should ever destroy his king and usurp his kingdom. But his good intention to find a remedy to preserve his king's life, was almost directly followed by his base and ungrateful intention to murder him. Both good and bad men are extremely apt

to trust in their own hearts; and though they have often been deceived by them, yet they will hope against hope, and believe against evidence, that their hearts will not be so deceitful in time to come, as they have been in times past. And so long as they retain this confidence in their hearts, they will certainly be disappointed. For so long as their hearts consist in discordant exercises, which alternately follow one another, they can have no solid ground of security against their instability and deception. Their own resolutions are like their other good exercises, liable to change, by all the objects, with which they are surrounded, by all the scenes they pass through, and by the great adversary, who lies in wait to deceive.

3. If the hearts of good men consist in free, voluntary exercises; then they ought to be perfectly holy in this life. For if they ought to have one holy exercise, then they ought to have another, and another, in a constant, uninterrupted succession. They have no right to exercise one selfish, sinful affection. And they are just as capable of exercising good affections, as bad affections. Accordingly, God requires them to love him supremely and constantly, and forbids them to exercise one single selfish affection. He does not, indeed, require them to put away any bad *principle*, for he knows, that they have no bad *principle* to put away; nor does he require them to cultivate, cherish, or improve any good *principle*, for he knows, that he has never implanted any good *principle* in them. But he does require them to *cease* to do evil, and learn to do well; to *cease* to set their affections on things *below*, and to set them on things *above*. He does require them to serve him with a *perfect* heart,

and with *all* the heart; and he does condemn them, whenever they do not serve him with a *perfect* heart. That is, he requires them always to exercise *holy* affections, and forbids them ever to exercise unholy affections. And this is the same thing as to require them to be perfectly holy in this life. The reason why many suppose, that even good men are not bound to be perfectly holy is, that they have derived a sinful *principle* from Adam, which they are under a natural inability to remove, and which no holy affections can destroy. But this is an unfounded and unscriptural opinion. They have no corrupt or depraved principle; they have only corrupt, sinful and selfish affections, which they might entirely remove from their heart, by the exercise of holy affections. They are, therefore, altogether inexcusable for not putting away all their moral depravity, and becoming *perfectly* holy. All their remaining depravity is voluntary depravity, which they might entirely banish from their hearts, by the constant, voluntary exercise of pure, holy love. It is their constant and indispensable duty to keep themselves always in the love of God, and continually exercise perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. There is nothing to hinder them from attaining sinless perfection, but their voluntary neglect of exercising the same holy affections *at all times*, which they do actually and cheerfully exercise *at some times*.

4. If a good heart consists in holy exercises, then the gospel as really requires *perfect* holiness, as the law. Some suppose there is a wide difference between the precepts of the law and the precepts of the gospel. They allow, that the precepts of the law require perfect holiness; but they imagine, that the pre-

cepts of the gospel do not require perfect holiness. But if all holiness consists in the exercises of the heart, then every exercise of holiness is perfect holiness. Every exercise of true love is perfect love. Every exercise of true repentance is perfect repentance. Every exercise of true faith is perfect faith. And every exercise of true submission is perfect submission.--- The precepts of the gospel, therefore, require perfect holiness, as much as the precepts of the law. The difference between the law and the gospel does not lie in their *precepts*, but in their *promises*. The law promises eternal life to nothing short of the constant, uninterrupted exercise of holy affections, and condemns the man, who indulges one selfish, sinful affection ; but the gospel promises eternal life to every one, who perseveres in holy exercises, though they are interrupted in a thousand instances. The gospel requires constant exercises of holy affections ; yet, nevertheless, it pardons in case of failure. The gospel does not allow, or approve of one sin ; yet it pardons innumerable transgressions, upon the condition of faith and repentance. The gospel has made no abatement, in respect to the requisition and obligation of duty ; but it has made provision for the salvation of those, who do not yield that perfect obedience to God, which his law requires. In this respect, the law and gospel differ ; but not in their precepts, prohibitions and penalties. The gospel requires the same supreme and constant love to God, that the law requires.

5. If the hearts of saints consist altogether in moral and voluntary exercises ; then they never have any more holiness, than they have *holy* exercises. Many suppose, that good men are much better, than their

good exercises. For when their exercises are not good; still they have a good *principle*, or good heart abiding in them, which is indeed the essence of all goodness. But if they have no good principle or good heart distinct from their good exercises, then they cannot have any more goodness, than they have good affections. Some have supposed, that christians may live days, and months, and even years, in a dull, stupid, lifeless state, their principle of grace continuing, but not in proper, sensible exercises. This is both a groundless and dangerous doctrine. It is groundless, because christians have no such *principle* of grace, all grace consisting in exercise. And it is dangerous, because, it has a direct tendency to make men think they are christians, who were never subjects of saving grace; and to make real christians imagine, that they are better than they are, and sincerely doing their duty, while they live in the total neglect of it. It is probable, that those methodists, who profess to believe, that they have attained to sinless perfection, build their absurd opinion upon the supposition, that grace essentially consists in *principle*, and not in exercise. For it is difficult to suppose, that any man in his right mind, can make himself believe, that *all* his thoughts, words, and actions are constantly and perfectly agreeable to the law of love. It is easy to conceive, however, that if holiness consists altogether in a holy *principle*, any one, who believes this to be true, may persuade himself, that he has really *ceased* from sin, and attained to sinless perfection. Indeed, the doctrine, that holiness, grace, or a good heart, consists in a *principle*, and not in *exercise*, is a fruitful source of many great doctrinal and practical errors.

6. If the hearts of saints consist altogether in free, voluntary exercises; then there is a foundation in their hearts for a spiritual warfare. The contrariety between their holy and unholy exercises, naturally produces a spiritual conflict. Sinners often find a struggle between sin and conscience; but the warfare, which christians experience, arises from the mutual opposition between holy and unholy affections. Their hearts are composed of holy and selfish exercises, which mutually hate and oppose each other. In the exercise of benevolence, they hate selfishness; and in the exercise of selfishness, they hate benevolence. And as they are sensible of the instability of their hearts, they feel a propriety, a necessity, and moral obligation, to keep them with all diligence, to repel the assaults and intrusion of sinful exercises. They dread the approaching enemy, and find occasion to watch and guard their hearts against every hostile affection, lest they should be brought into captivity to sin.—Christians find two contending powers in their hearts, which subject them to a painful conflict, which will never cease, as long as their moral imperfection remains, or their hearts are composed of both holy and unholy affections. But we cannot account for this spiritual warfare in christians, if their holiness consisted in a holy *principle*, and their sinfulness consisted in a sinful *principle*; for *two dormant, inactive principles* could never hate, resist, and oppose each other; nor could one ever gain the ascendency over the other. Christians know, by experience, that their spiritual warfare arises wholly from their discordant and conflicting exercises. In the exercise of holiness they hate, and oppose all *sin*; but in the exercise of

selfishness, they hate and oppose *holy* and *benevolent exercises*. When they love God, they hate and oppose the love of the world; but when they love the world, the love of God is not in them: or as our Savior says, while they serve God, they hate to serve mammon; and while they serve mammon, they hate to serve God. The breast of every christian is a field of battle, where sometimes benevolence, and sometimes selfishness gains the victory; but there is no solid peace till benevolence repels and excludes selfishness.

7. In the view of this subject, christians may see their great moral imperfection. Though they sometimes love God supremely, and serve him with a perfect heart and the whole heart, though sometimes their holy affections run on cheerfully and uninterruptedly; and though for a while they find a pleasure in doing the will of God; yet they often experience as long a series of unholy, as holy affections, and find more pleasure in serving themselves, than in serving God. Their hearts are bent to backsliding. They rarely find their hearts perfectly *united* in their best duties. They often wait upon the Lord with much distraction and confusion of thought. Were the *whole train* of their affections presented to their own view, as they appear to the omniscient eye of God, they would be shocked and confounded. Were the *whole series* of their thoughts and internal exercises printed in a book, or engraven on a rock, as Job desired some of his thoughts and exercises might be, how inconsistent, absurd and criminal would they appear? Or were their meditations and devotions in their most retired and solemn intervals, registered in their own minds, as they

are registered in the book of God's remembrance, how painful would their reflections be on such occasions? Would they not read in some such language as this? "O Lord, thy ways are equal, but my ways are unequal. O Lord, my ways are equal, but thy ways are unequal. O Lord, thou art good; O Lord, thou art an hard master. O Lord, I am unworthy of the least of thy mercies; O Lord, I do well to complain of thee, in taking away my mercies. O Lord, thy will be done; O Lord, let my will be done. O Lord, let me be thy servant; O Lord, be thou my servant. O Lord, forgive my enemies. O Lord, forgive them not. O Lord, make me to serve my generation according to thy will. O Lord, make my generation serve me contrary to thy will." Now, whether any good man be able, or not, to recollect the whole train of his past exercises, in both his secular and religious concerns; yet God always sees and observes every thought and imagination of his heart, and views its mixture of holy and unholy affections. How great then, and how displeasing to God, is the moral imperfections of the best of saints? And how much reason have they to humble themselves before him, and walk softly in his sight? And with what watchfulness and constancy should every christian offer unto God the prayer of the devout psalmist; "*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*"

SERMON XX.

THE CRUCIFIED MALEFACTORS.

LUKE, XXIII. 39---43.—*And one of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Though all the four evangelists agree in relating some circumstances attending Christ's crucifixion, yet they all differ, one from another, in omitting some circumstances attending it. They all mention, that Christ was crucified with two persons. John says, "they crucified him, and two others with him, one on either side, and Jesus in the midst." Matthew says, "Then were two thieves crucified with him: one on the right hand, and the other on the left." Mark says, "And with him they crucified two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left." Luke barely calls them malefactors. Matthew and Mark say, that both the malefactors joined with others in reviling him on the cross. Luke mentions only one of them, as railing on him; and John mentions nothing

that they said. These different accounts of the circumstances of Christ's crucifixion do not contradict one another; and therefore, instead of weakening, serve to confirm the testimony of each evangelist. One only relates what another omitted, which proves that they did not combine together to frame a cunningly devised fable, but that they all wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. There is, therefore, no just ground to discredit what Luke says in the text, concerning the discourse and conduct of the two malefactors, though no other evangelist gives the same account. Though Matthew and Mark say, that both the malefactors reviled Christ, yet what Luke says may be equally true, that one of them reproved the other for railing on him; for both of them might have felt and acted alike for a while, and yet afterwards have widely differed in their views and feelings. Accordingly, I propose to consider,

I. Wherein these two malefactors were alike;

II. When they began to differ; And,

III. Wherein they finally differed.

I. Let us consider wherein these two malefactors were alike. And,

1. They were alike in respect to depravity of heart. They were the descendants of Adam; and like the rest of his posterity, came into the world in a state of moral depravity. They were totally destitute of true love to God and under the entire dominion of a depraved heart. Every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil, only evil continually. They possessed a carnal mind, which was enmity to God, not subject to his law, neither could be. Their hearts were full of selfish and sinful affections, which

totally excluded every spark of holy love, or true benevolence. They were dead in trespasses and sins and altogether destitute of spiritual life. They were both born, grew up, and lived in this sinful and guilty state, till after they became malefactors. This we may justly conclude from their becoming such abandoned characters. We have no intimation, that one was any better than the other, in respect to the total depravity of their hearts.

2. They were alike in respect to their knowledge of Christ. As there is nothing said concerning their being strangers, foreigners, or pagans, we must suppose, they were the children of Jewish parents, born and brought up in Jerusalem; where they were circumcised the eighth day, and taught to attend all the private and public duties of religion, according to all the laws of Moses. And as Christ often went up to Jerusalem to attend divine ordinances, it is very possible, if not probable, that these two malefactors, as well as thousands of other stupid and profligate sinners, might have had opportunities of hearing Christ preach, or of seeing him work miracles. But there is no probability, that *one* of them knew any more about Christ, than the *other*, before they were led with him to Calvary, and extended on the cross. I know, that some have supposed, the penitent malefactor had known more about Christ; and conducted better in general, than the other malefactor; which was the reason that he repented, while the other remained obstinate. This however, is a mere conjecture, which has no foundation in scripture. Both of them might have been, for aught we know to the contrary, totally ignorant of Christ, until the day of their crucifixion.

Or both of them might have been equally acquainted with the person, preaching, and miracles of Christ, before they were either guilty, or condemned for their crimes. But since all the evangelists are silent respecting their knowledge of Christ, we have no right to suppose, that one knew any more about Christ, than the other, but ought to presume, that they were alike in this respect. We know, however,

3. That they were alike in practice. Though they were born and brought up in Jerusalem, and had been early dedicated to God, and instructed in the true religion; yet they were certainly sinners in Zion, and extremely vicious. They violated the laws of God and man. They were guilty of the detestable crime of stealing. Matthew says, speaking of the crucifixion of Christ, "Then were two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left." Mark speaking of the same solemn scene, says, "And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left." And Luke calls them both malefactors. It is very probable, that they began their vicious course early in life, and followed one evil practice after another, till they were prepared to perpetrate the enormous crimes, for which they were condemned to die. We know, therefore,

4. That they were alike in condemnation. They were both apprehended, and brought before a human tribunal, where they were tried, convicted, and doomed to die the painful and reproachful death of the cross. When the day appointed for their execution arrived, they were taken out of prison, and led with Christ, in dreadful formality, amidst thousands of spectators, to mount Calvary, where they were extended on the

cross, and where, for some time, they continued to feel and express the astonishing obduracy and malignity of their hearts. Hear what Saint Matthew says respecting their treatment of Christ, while they were suffering with him on the cross. "Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also, the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, he saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. *The thieves also which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*" Mark agrees with Matthew in mentioning the same insulting language and conduct of the spectators of the crucifixion, and subjoins, "they that were crucified with him *reviled him.*" This testimony of the two inspired evangelists, leaves us no room to doubt, but that both of the malefactors were alike hardened and impenitent, till after they were actually suspended on the cross; for they both joined with the surrounding multitudes, in reviling the suffering Savior. Let us next consider,

II. When they began to differ. Luke tells us in the text, that they did differ before they died. "And one of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost

thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" This was not reviling Christ, but reproving his fellow criminal for reviling him. He now felt differently from what he had felt, and from what the other reviler continued to feel. The question now is, when they began to differ. It was not when they received the sentence of death. It was not when they were walking to the place of execution. It was not when they were first nailed to the cross. For after they had gone through those trying and affecting scenes, they both remained hardened and impenitent. Though neither of the evangelists *expressly* informs us, when they began to differ; yet two of them, Matthew and Mark, *implicitly* inform us. Immediately after they have told us, that both the thieves reviled Christ, they mention the precise time, when the supernatural darkness overspread the land. Matthew says, "*Now* from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." Mark says, "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." This account of the supernatural darkness immediately after the account of both the malefactors reviling Christ, very plainly intimates, that they began to differ, at the time the darkness began. And we can easily believe, that such an unexpected and solemn miracle on such an awful occasion, did make a deep impression upon the minds of all the spectators of the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, and more upon some, than others. It is highly probable, therefore, that some time between the sixth and ninth hour, the difference between the two malefactors began. It now remains to consider,

III. Wherein they eventually and finally differed. Here it may be observed,

1. That one realized the wrath of God abiding upon him, while the other did not. This appears from the pertinent and solemn reproof, which he gave to his wicked, stupid, unfeeling associate. "Dost not *thou fear God*?" "He is angry with the wicked every day, and this day especially, he is displaying his awful displeasure towards this sinful world, and his peculiar displeasure towards us, the chief of sinners. I feel now, what I never felt before, the weight of God's wrath. And the thought strikes me, with terror and consternation, that I am just going into eternity, where I see nothing but that I must suffer the severest tokens of his wrath forever. We have despised his wrath too long, and even presumed to insult *him*, who calls himself the Son of God; and if he be his Son, will he not resent our malignant and presumptuous conduct, and make us feel more sensibly than we now feel, the dreadful consequences of our aggravated guilt? My fears are alarmed. I feel as though God would instantly plunge me in everlasting darkness and despair. And have not you reason to fear, as well as I? I tremble for you, as well as for myself." This poor, perishing criminal was thoroughly awakened from his long and habitual stupidity, and clearly saw his dangerous condition; which is usually the first step to conversion. He might, however, have seen and felt such danger, and with his eyes open gone to destruction. But,

2. His *awakening* was followed with *conviction*. He not only realized, that he was exposed to everlasting misery, but was convinced, in his conscience, that he deserved it. Sinners often feel exposed to endless destruction, while their conscience is asleep, and they have no genuine conviction, that any, or all of their sins

deserve perpetual punishment. But when this awakened criminal saw the nature, number, and magnitude of his transgressions, his conscience awoke and did its office, and convinced him, that he deserved eternal death. So he said to his incorrigible associate, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." This was expressive of his genuine conviction of sin, and of his just desert not only of the condemnation of man, but of the condemnation of God. He felt that he had been justly condemned before a human tribunal, and might be still more justly condemned before the tribunal of God, his supreme and final Judge. For he was now looking into eternity, and felt that he was already and justly condemned by the righteous law of God to everlasting death. This, he was convinced in his conscience, was but the due reward of his deeds. But though his fears were alarmed, and his conscience thoroughly convinced; yet he might have retained his enmity and opposition of heart to God, and actually suffered the eternal punishment due to him for sin. There is reason to fear, that multitudes have experienced great awakenings and great convictions, and yet have continued to contend with God, and to refuse to submit to the terms of life, proposed in the gospel, till they sunk down into the pit of destruction. And this might have been the case of the awakened and convinced malefactor, had he not become cordially reconciled to the *justice* of God in casting him off forever. But it appears,

3. That he did renounce his enmity to God, and become cordially reconciled to his *vindictive* justice.

It is true, indeed, that his barely saying and feeling, that he was justly condemned, and received the due reward of his deeds on the cross, was not a certain evidence, that he was *cordially* reconciled to God in his future and eternal condemnation. All the finally condemned, at the last day, will feel a full conviction of conscience, that the Judge of all the earth has done right, in dooming them to endless destruction; while they remain eternally unreconciled to his vindictive justice in their exterminable punishment. The convictions of sinners, both in this life and in that which is to come, are so far from diminishing, that they increased their *guilt* and *desert* of punishment. But what the malefactor said, after he had acknowledged the justice of God in his condemnation, affords complete evidence, that he cordially accepted the punishment of his iniquity, and was heartily willing that God should actually inflict it upon him, if his glory required it. For he directly turned to Christ and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Christ knew his heart, and knew that he justified God and condemned himself in his heart, as well as in his conscience, and exercised unconditional submission to divine sovereignty in saving and destroying guilty sinners. And it was upon the sole ground of his sincere repentance and unreserved submission, that he assured him, that he should that day be with him in paradise. It is certain, therefore, that he renounced his enmity to God, and became cordially reconciled to his justice, as well as to his mercy.

4. Having exercised true love, repentance, and submission towards God, he exercised a saving faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ. His love, repentance, and submission towards God prepared him sincerely to desire salvation through the atonement, which Christ was then making. He felt his perishing need of a Savior, and Christ, whom he believed to be, what he had professed to be, the Son of God, who came to seek and save them that were lost, appeared to be such a Savior as he needed. For he saw him actually giving his life a ransom for many, as he had often declared in his preaching, that he was about to do. It was a matter of public notoriety, that Jesus of Nazareth had frequently said, that he must suffer and die, and rise again on the third day. It was upon the ground of such declarations, that his enemies desired Pilate to set a guard around his sepulchre. The penitent malefactor believed Christ's predictions, and that he was then dying, to rise again and enter into his kingdom of heaven. And in the language of his faith, he said, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."—This was an expression of his sincere and lively faith in the dying Redeemer, that he was able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Thus the two malefactors began to differ while hanging on the cross: and they continued to differ as long as they lived, and will continue to differ as long as they exist. The penitent and believing malefactor died, and immediately entered into paradise, where he will continue forever perfectly holy and perfectly happy. And the impenitent and unbelieving malefactor died, and immediately sunk down into a state of unalterable and eternal sin and misery. I now proceed to the improvement of the subject.

What has been said in this discourse may serve to throw light upon some important subjects, which have

been supposed to be dark and difficult to understand.

1. It appears from the conduct of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of unconditional submission is founded *in fact*. He really felt and expressed a cordial and unreserved submission to God, when he expected in a few moments to sink down into the pit of endless destruction. While he was suffering the excruciating pains of the cross; while his sins were set in order before him; while he had a clear view of an awful and miserable eternity; and before Christ had given him the least intimation, that he would pardon and save him; he expressed a filial fear of God, and cordially justified his conduct in condemning him to eternal destruction. And he reproved his wicked and stupid associate for not having the same views and feelings, which he had in his own mind. "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of of our deeds." This reproof flowed from his heart, as well as from his conscience. He loved God so well, that he could not bear to hear him reproached; and he hated sin so much, that he could not refrain from condemning it, in himself and others. He loved God so well, that he could praise and justify his conduct, though cast out of his favor and suffering his righteous displeasure forever. This is what the scripture means by sinners accepting the punishment of their iniquity; and this is what we mean, by their exercising unconditional submission. We find, therefore, that the true doctrine of unconditional submission is founded *in fact*. Be it so, as many say, that Moses did not exercise unconditional submission, when he desired God to blot him out of his book, upon a certain condition. Be it

so, that Paul did not exercise unconditional submission, when he said, he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren according to the flesh.--- Be it so, that there is no text in the bible, that expressly requires men to exercise unconditional submission ; yet it will always remain true *in fact*, that the penitent malefactor did *exercise unconditional submission*. And this fact proves, that any *penitent* sinner *may* exercise unconditional submission. And it equally proves, that every penitent sinner must exercise unconditional submission, in order to be saved. I know, that we often hear it said, that it is morally impossible, that sinners should exercise unconditional submission ; because it is entirely contrary to the human heart, or that love to self, which is natural to every man. It is readily conceded, that it is morally impossible for any sinner, under the influence of his unrenewed, natural and impenitent heart, to exercise unconditional submission ; yet this is no evidence, that a sinner, under the influence of a holy, benevolent, penitent heart, cannot exercise unconditional submission. For we find, that one sinner, under such a holy, benevolent, penitent heart, did actually exercise unconditional submission. I know we often hear it said, that though it be morally possible for penitent sinners to exercise unconditional submission ; yet there is no necessity or occasion for their exercising such submission, in order to be saved. But the penitent malefactor, while standing on the verge of time, and the borders of eternity, without any hope of escaping eternal death, the proper wages of sin, found an occasion and even a necessity of exercising unconditional submission, in order to believe and be saved. Had he

not been truly penitent and submissive to divine sovereignty, he could not have looked with an eye of love and faith to the dying Redeemer to save him. Or had he looked with any other, than a submissive heart, he would have looked in vain. Christ would have let him perish, with the other malefactor. Now, there is a time, when every penitent sinner is totally uncertain, whether he shall be saved or lost; and at that time, he feels the propriety and necessity of exercising unconditional submission; and he does actually exercise it. It is as certain, that he exercises unconditional submission, as it is that he believes in Christ, and renounces all self-dependance and self-righteousness.--- And it is equally true, that every christian under the hidings of God's face, and when he loses his hope, finds a propriety and necessity of exercising unconditional submission, and can find no peace, till he does it. Only admit the doctrine of God's sovereignty in saving and destroying whom he pleases, and the doctrine of unconditional submission follows from one of the first principles of christianity as well as from the plain fact, of the penitent and submissive malefactor.

2. It appears from the views and exercises of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of repentance before faith, is founded in fact. This is asserted by some, but denied by others. They say, that faith is before both love and repentance towards God. And the reason they give for this opinion is, that no man can either love God, or repent of his sins against him, until he has some good evidence, that God loves him, and intends to save him. They say, that it is morally impossible for sinners to love God, or repent of sin, while they view him as their enemy, and disposed to

punish them forever ; and therefore, they must believe that he intends to save them, before they can exercise either love or repentance towards him. This, however, some suppose is a false and dangerous doctrine ; and maintain that every sinner must love God and repent of sin, before he can exercise a cordial, saving faith in Christ. Though we believe, that the scriptures speak plainly and decidedly upon this question ; yet much *has* been said, and much is still said, on both sides of it. Passing over all particular texts respecting the priority of faith to repentance, and the priority of repentance to faith, let us have recourse to the infallible decision of *fact*. As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of one true believer answereth to that of another. Though every true believer is not conscious of the exact order of his gracious exercises in conversion ; yet no doubt, the gracious exercises of every believer do *in fact* take place in the *same* order. Now, we know in what order the gracious exercises of the penitent malefactor took place at his conversion. He, first of all, *loved* God, and could not bear that he should be reproached, or dishonored. In the next place, he exercised unfeigned repentance and unreserved submission to God. And in the last place, he exercised a cordial, saving faith in his suffering Redeemer. His *love* to God was before his *repentance* and *submission* ; and his repentance and submission were before his faith in Christ. This is the natural order of the first gracious affections of every true believer ; and it is difficult to conceive, how they can ever take place in a different order. For no man can repent of sin against God, before he loves God ; and no man can love Christ for condemning sin, before he hates and

repents of sin. Repentance of sin, therefore, must be before faith in Christ. I know, that some, in order to avoid this consequence, blend love, repentance and faith all together; but neither reason, nor scripture allows them to do it; and plain fact condemns it. The penitent malefactor did exercise love and repentance towards God, before he exercised faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. It appears from the views and feelings of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of *instantaneous regeneration* is founded *in fact*. All who are not Calvinistic in their sentiments, deny this doctrine. They suppose, that regeneration is a progressive work of the Spirit, and never effected instantaneously, nor in any short space of time. And they endeavor to explain all that the scripture says upon this subject agreeably to their opinion. But this instance of the penitent malefactor, has given them much trouble, and ingenious and learned labor to explain away. Bishop Hoadly has, in his discourse concerning the two malefactors, displayed the most ingenuity and plausibility on his side of the question. He supposes that the penitent malefactor had been generally a regular man, except in one instance of theft; that he had been familiarly acquainted with Christ; that he had often heard him preach, and seen him work miracles; and that he was almost a christian, before he came to the cross. And he considers his situation there as very singular and extraordinary. He had just come from a human tribunal, where he had been tried and condemned. He was placed by the side of Christ on the cross, while actually suffering for the sins of the world, and involved in that supernatural and awful darkness, which overspread the land.

But all these plausible things stand completely refuted by the plain facts related concerning the penitent malefactor. He proved himself to be a stupid, hardened, and malignant sinner before he was tried and condemned, and before he was nailed to the cross, by actually joining with his wicked associate, in *reviling him*, whom he knew to be innocent, and whom he knew called himself the *Son of God*. But he was in a few hours or in a few moments after this, instantaneously and savingly changed, and turned from sin to holiness, from the power of satan unto God, and became a *new* creature, with new views and new feelings towards God and his stupid associate. And what God did in renewing his heart, he can do in renewing any other sinner's heart. He always acts as instantaneously in taking away the old, and in giving a *new* heart. For regeneration is a new creation, which is always effected instantaneously.

4. It appears from the conduct of God towards the two malefactors, that he acts as a sovereign, in renewing the hearts of men. The doctrine of divine sovereignty in making one, and not another, the subject of his special grace, is founded *in fact*. This doctrine, indeed, is very plainly taught in scripture. God declares that "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy ; and whom he will he hardeneth." He takes one and leaves another, without any *apparent* reason, why one of the persons should be taken, rather than the other ; or why one of them should be left, rather than the other. The two malefactors were as much alike, as almost any two persons ever were ; and we can discover no reason in their characters, conduct, or situation, why one should be made a subject of special grace, and the other left to pine away in his iniquity.

They were both sinners, and great sinners, and obstinate sinners. They were both stout hearted before a human tribunal. They were both stout hearted while hanging on the cross, and upon the very brink of hell. They both deserved to perish in their sins forever.--- They were both by the side of the divine Redeemer. It was as easy for him to give repentance and salvation to one as to the other, and to both as to one. But he saw fit to awaken, convince, and convert one, and raise him to heaven ; while he let the other sink by his side into the bottomless pit. He knew the amazing distinction he made between these two equally ill-deserving sinners, and the glorious and awful consequences, which would eternally flow from it. And in the view of all these consequences, he saw just and weighty reasons for saving one and destroying the other. We may well conclude therefore, that there are good reasons in the divine mind, for every act of divine sovereignty in saving those, whom he does save, and destroying those whom he does destroy. And these reasons will one day appear, and completely justify the divine conduct, in respect to those who are saved and taken to heaven, and those who are driven away in their sins to the regions of everlasting darkness and despair.

5. The conduct of the impenitent malefactor, shows that no *external* means or motives, are sufficient to awaken, convince, or convert any stupid sinners. He enjoyed great religious advantages. He was born in Zion ; he was circumcised the eighth day ; he had opportunity, at seven years old, to attend the passover ; he had opportunity to hear the divine law read every sabbath ; and it is very likely that he had heard Christ

preach and seen him work miracles ; for he knew that he called himself the Son of God. But none of these means of religion, had any good effect upon his mind. His own iniquities corrected him, brought him before a human tribunal, where he was tried, and condemned to die a most painful and reproachful death.— After this dreadful sentence was passed upon him, he was led back to the place of confinement ; where he had time to meditate and reflect upon death, the dread formalities of a public execution, and the still more awful realities of the eternal world. And if he had any friends, especially pious friends, they undoubtedly came and conversed with him about the state of his mind, and a preparation for eternity. But all these means and motives left him still stupid and hardened. Soon the solemn day arrived, when he was led to Calvary, the place of execution, and fastened to the cross by the side of the Son of God and Savior of the world, and there he hung from the sixth to the ninth hour in agonies, and heard the melting reproof of his penitent companion in guilt and suffering, and the assurance of the divine Redeemer, that he should that day be with him in paradise. But no instructions, no warnings, no reproofs, and no views of eternity could awaken, or convince, or convert him. He obstinately persisted in stupidity, impenitence, and unbelief, till he closed his eyes upon this world and lifted them up in eternal torments. Here we see it demonstrated, that no moral suasion, no human means, or exertions can subdue and soften any hard, impenitent heart. Every impenitent sinner had rather die eternally, than submit unconditionally to God, and embrace the humiliating terms of the gospel.

6. It appears from the fate of the impenitent malefactor, that impenitent sinners have no ground to rely upon the mere mercy of Christ in a dying hour. Many sinners in a state of health and prosperity, place all their hopes of salvation upon what they shall see, and feel, and experience upon a sick and dying bed. They hope that such a scene will awaken them out of their stupidity and give them a realizing sense of their danger and guilt. And they hope, that when they do realize their lost and perishing condition, they shall cry for mercy. And when they do, in anguish and distress, cry for mercy, they hope that Christ will pity and save them from both sin and destruction. But such views, and feelings, and expectations of careless, delaying sinners are expressive of extreme ignorance, deception, and presumption. It is owing to their ignorance, and self-deception, that they expect that any external means, or motives, or circumstances will overcome their habits of sin and stupidity. They have no more reason to hope that any thing attending a sick and dying bed, will have more tendency to awaken and convince them of their perishing condition, than the tremendous scene, through which the impenitent malefactor past, had to awaken him from his habitual and obstinate stupidity, and lead him to cry to Christ for mercy, while actually suffering the pains and agonies of a dying hour. He appears to have no bands in his death ; no apprehension of his aggravated guilt, or of the aggravated punishment which awaited him, after his day of grace and space of repentance expired. How many impenitent, hardened sinners have since exhibited the same melancholy evidence of the same stupidity in a dying hour? It is daring presumption for any careless, delaying sinners

to expect, that either sickness, or even the pains of death will awaken them from their stupidity, till they open their eyes in torment. But supposing that sickness or the near approach of death should alarm their fears and throw them into the most distressing sense of their guilty and perishing state; what ground have they to expect, that Christ will then hear their cries, and pity and pardon, and save them? He perfectly knew the guilt and danger of the impenitent malefactor, but he manifested no pity or compassion towards him; but suffered him to drop into destruction under his eye, and by his bleeding side. Christ knew what would be the dreadful condition of the impenitent malefactor before he was condemned and nailed to the cross, as well as afterwards; and therefore could see no new reasons for saving him then, which he had not seen before. And he saw no sufficient reason for saving him either before or at his death, and of consequence let him die the death he deserved. This instance of Christ's conduct forbids all impenitent sinners to rely upon Christ's *mercy* to give them repentance and salvation in a dying hour. It is as consistent with the mercy of Christ to suffer them to die in distress, as in stupidity. And it is very likely, that he does suffer many more to die in terror, than in carnal ease and stupidity. It is, therefore, presumption in any sinners to live in the hope of a death bed repentance.

7. It appears from the conduct and condition of the the penitent malefactor, that sinners may be saved at the eleventh or last hour of life, if they really repent and believe in Christ. When sinners are awakened to see their own hearts, and desert of future and endless destruction, they are very apt to despond under a painful

apprehension, that their day of grace and space of repentance are over, and that it is utterly vain and useless for them to strive to enter the strait gate; the door of mercy being forever shut. This they gather from what they read concerning sinners being given up, and from what Christ said in the parable of the ten virgins, respecting those who came too late, and from what they read and hear in sermons. But their fears arising from these, or any other considerations, are groundless.--- There is but one unpardonable sin, and that is not the sin of delay or neglect; but the sin against the *Holy Ghost*. That sin excepted, all others are pardonable at the latest hour of life, upon the condition of repentance and faith. There is a sense, in which all the non-elect are *given up*; but such a *giving up* is consistent with their being in a state of *probation*; and it is as true of them, as it is of any other sinners, that they may be saved, if they repent and believe the gospel, at any moment before they die. The impenitent malefactor was one of the *non-elect*; but his day of grace and space of repentance lasted as long as the day of grace and space of repentance lasted in respect to the penitent malefactor. And we know that his day of grace and of repentance lasted to the eleventh hour. Had his fellow sinner hearkened to his reproof and admonition, and exercised a filial fear of God, and repented, and made the same sincere request to Christ, he would have met with the assurance of pardon and salvation. And there is reason to believe, that there have been many individual instances of genuine conversions, at the latest hour of life. We may be assured, however, that it is never too late to repent and believe the gospel, before men breathe their last breath.

8. It appears from the instance of the penitent malefactor, that as soon as the souls of men leave their bodies, they do immediately pass into a state of endless happiness, or a state of endless misery. Christ assured that late penitent, that he should that day be with him in paradise, that is, the kingdom of heaven. It is, therefore, an unscriptural, as well as absurd opinion, that greatly prevails at this day, that the soul either dies with the body and becomes extinct, or else falls into a state of sleep, or total insensibility. Notwithstanding all the figurative representations of death in scripture, which seem to imply either the extinction or insensibility of the soul after it leaves the world; it appears to be *true in fact*, that it does exist in a state of sensibility and activity. It is a fact that Enoch, Moses, and Elias are gone to heaven. It is a fact, that the penitent malefactor is gone to heaven. It is a fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are gone to heaven. And it is a fact, that Paul desired to die an early death, that he might go the sooner to heaven. Which desire would have been absurd, if he expected, that death would put an end to the existence of his soul, or throw it into a state of sleep, or total insensibility. Now, if it be true in fact, that the souls of the righteous survive the body and go to heaven immediately after death; then there is no doubt, but that the souls of the wicked when they die, do still exist, and go into a state of endless perdition And what our Savior said respecting Dives and Lazarus affords a strong argument in favor of this conclusion. If he did not mean to represent the state of good and bad men after death, it is impossible to know what he did mean by that most striking parable he ever spake. And if he did mean to repre-

sent the state of good and bad men after death ; then there is full evidence, that they exist in a state of sensibility, and either enjoy the happiness of heaven, or suffer the miseries of the damned.

Finally, it appears from what has been said, that the day of death is a very solemn and important day.--- The day when Christ poured out his soul unto death, was a solemn and distressing day. He then drank the bitter cup, which his Father put into his hand, and which caused him to exclaim in the language of distress, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" The day of death was extremely solemn and interesting to the two poor guilty creatures, who were crucified and expired with him. That day determined their everlasting destiny. It put a final period to their probationary state, and fixed them, both in an unalterable and eternal condition. It was a day of eternal salvation to one, and a day of eternal destruction to the other. The day of death has been equally terrible and interesting to thousands of other poor creatures, who have been sent into eternity under similar solemn circumstances. It was a day of awful solemnity, which the last week determined the eternal destiny of four poor, guilty, miserable creatures.* It appeared so, I presume to all, who beheld the awful scene. But the circumstances of death are never so solemn and interesting, as the eternal consequences, which follow from it. And these are essentially the same, let death come at what time and in what form it may. Death is now on his way to arrest every one of us, and how soon he will lay his cold hand upon us, we know not. The day is certainly near to some of us,

* The execution of four criminals near Boston, February 1819.

and cannot be far distant from any of us. We are all condemned to die, and the sentence will soon be executed upon us; for there is no reprieve from death; there is no discharge from that war. It deeply concerns each of us to ask himself, Have I cordially justified God and his law, in my condemnation? Have I condemned myself as his law condemns me? Have I accepted the punishment of mine iniquity? Have I with unreserved submission and a sincere faith turned my eye to Christ, and committed myself to his sovereign mercy? Have I ever felt as that poor, guilty, humble, submissive, penitent, believing creature felt, to whom Christ said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?" If any of you, my hearers, can sincerely answer these questions in the affirmative to your own satisfaction, you must be in your own view, prepared for the day of death. But if any of you cannot answer these questions sincerely in the affirmative, you are not in your own view prepared to meet the king of terrors.--- And if you are now, and continue to be impenitent and unbelieving, you must all, like the impenitent criminal on the cross, eventually and eternally perish. But why will ye die? *Life*, as well as death, is set before you. *Choose life, and you shall live.*